DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 425 UD 028 779

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Styles, Melanie B.; Morrow, Kristine V. |
| TITLE | Understanding How Youth and Elders Form Relationships: A Study of Four Linking Lifetimes Programs. |
| INSTITUTION | Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia, PA. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Commonwealth Fund, New York, N.Y.; Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA. |
| PUB DATE | Jun 92 |
| NOTE | 102p.; Funding also provided by the Pinkerton Foundation. |
| PUB TYPE | Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Adolescents; Age Differences; At Risk Persons; Community Programs; Demonstration Programs; *Disadvantaged Youth; *Intergenerational Programs; Interpersonal Competence; *Interpersonal Relationship; Mentors; *Older Adults; Program Evaluation; Urban Youth; Youth Problems; Youth Programs |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Intergenerational Relationship; *Linking Lifetimes Programs; Temple University PA |

ABSTRACT

As part of a 4-year research initiative on adult/youth relationships programs, this study assessed relationships between elders and at-risk youth at the following four Linking Lifetimes intergenerational mentoring demonstration sites developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania): (1) Neighborhood Youth Association in Los Angeles (California); (2) Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development in Miami (Florida); (3) Porter Leath Children's Center in Memphis (Tennessee); and (4) Corporation for Public Management in Springfield (Massachusetts). Elders were 55 years old and older, and youth were 12 to 17 years old. Using 26 pairs of 1 youth and 1 elder, the study examined pair activities, the relationship formation process, and effective and ineffective practices in the relationships. Elders met between 4 and 10 hours a week with youth and received stipends and reimbursements for expenses. Separate face-to-face semistructured interviews with all subjects were conducted at two times. Seventeen pairs were satisfying and 9 pairs were dissatisfying to the participants. The pairs' particular activities did not determine satisfaction. Differences existed in participants' interaction styles. Elders in satisfying relationships allowed the content and timing of the relationships to be youth-driven. Included are 5 tables, 33 references, and 2 appendixes describing the Linking Lifetimes initiative and study methodology in 2 tables. (JB)

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# Understanding How Youth and Elders Form Relationships:

## A Study of Four Linking Lifetimes Programs

Melanie B. Styles
Kristine V. Morrow

UD 028 779

June 1992

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Public/Private Ventures
399 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 592-9099

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was funded by The Commonwealth Fund, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Pinkerton Foundation and an anonymous donor. We wish to thank these foundations for their generous support.

Alvia Branch guided and supervised the research effort--this report could not have been completed without her support. P/PV staff members Barbara Robinson and Cathy Toso, along with Wanda Coston, Kathryn Furano and Chris Welser, played integral roles in collecting and analyzing the data and contributed thoughtful insights. The authors wish to thank these staff and our other P/PV colleagues who critiqued the draft report and offered words of encouragement. We particularly wish to thank Gary Walker and Natalie Jaffe, whose insightful reviews brought organization to the text. Susan Tomko painstakingly transcribed all of the interviews; Carol Dash provided secretarial support; and the efforts of Michael Callaghan (copyediting), Carol Eresian (proofreading), and Maxine Sherman (word processing) ensured the report's publication.

Russell Jackson of Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR), was instrumental in participating in the development of the interview guides, interviewer training and data collection. Other DIR staff--Ken Jackson, Barbara Lujan and Ricardo Barnes--served as able interviewers. Benjamin Gottlieb of the University of Guelph, Steve and Mary Agnes Hamilton of Cornell University, and Robert Weiss of the University of Massachusetts guided the development of the analytical framework, interview protocols and interviewer training. Their enthusiasm and support of the research is greatly appreciated.

This project also benefitted from the wisdom of P/PV's Adult/Youth Relationships advisory board members: Richard Danzig of Latham & Watkins, Ron Ferguson of Harvard University, Frank Furstenberg of the University of Pennsylvania, Beatrix Hamburg of Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Harold Howe of Harvard University, Joan Schine of the Early Adolescent Helper program, Heather Weiss of Harvard University, and Emmy Werner of the University of California-Davis.

We are also grateful to Nancy Henkin, Anita Rogers and Cid Perez-Randal of Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning; the Linking Lifetimes funders, particularly Trudy Cross of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Barbara Greenberg of The Burden Foundation, and David Nee of The Ittleson Foundation; and fellow researchers Morgan Lyons, Sheila Britton and Suzie Cessna of Lodestar Management/Research, and Ivan Charner of the National Institute for Work and Learning for their constant support of this research effort and their aid in ensuring its completion.

We most especially wish to thank Linking Lifetimes' program staff--Joan Joseph, Sharon Kuhn, John Tansey, Jane Watkins, Ann Coggins and Loretta Gaulman--for sharing their experiences in starting up these programs and for scheduling the interviews. Finally, we are deeply indebted to the participants we interviewed for speaking so candidly and for allowing us to learn so much from their experiences.

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# PREFACE

The concept of mentoring as a discrete intervention is relatively new within the context of youth-serving programs. Although practitioners and policymakers have embraced the idea that programs can provide youth with supportive relationships, little research evidence currently exists to support this claim. Further, the concept of mentoring shares little common meaning among practitioners and no set of established best practices or operational lessons. To determine the usefulness of mentoring as an intervention in serving at-risk youth, P/PV has undertaken a four-year research initiative that addresses the following questions:

1. Are there large numbers of adults with enough flexible time and emotional resources to take on the demands of mentoring at-risk youngsters?

2. Can mentoring be integrated into large-scale youth-serving institutions, specifically juvenile justice agencies?

3. Is there a set of practices or features that roughly characterizes the adult role in an effective mentoring relationship?

4. What level of training and support activities, services and costs is required to administer mentoring programs effectively? What are "best practices" in these programs--how much training, screening, matching and supervision are required or optimal?

5. Will participating in these mentoring programs make important observable changes in the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of the at-risk young people and mentors?

Because no one study can thoroughly address all five questions, P/PV's research agenda includes a set of studies that together will provide credible evidence for answering these questions. That agenda includes studies of four Linking Lifetimes programs developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, two P/PV pilot programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, seven college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Compact's Campus Partners in Learning, and programs sponsored by the Washington, D.C. I Have a Dream Foundation.

The study of four Linking Lifetimes programs, the first product of this research initiative, is designed to identify and define effective adult/youth relationships. Thus, this study examines the intervention of mentoring itself--its content (what the pairs do together and talk about), its process (how these relationships develop, how they are sustained, how and why they end), and its practices (what constitutes effective practices in these relationships).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth need caring and consistent relationships with adults to transition successfully into adulthood; yet increasingly, many youth are growing up isolated from this support. The question that inevitably arises is whether this void can be filled by social interventions. One programmatic response has been creation of mentoring programs that recruit adult volunteers to work with youth in need of adult support. Although practitioners and policymakers have embraced the idea that these programs can provide youth with supportive relationships, little research evidence currently exists to support this claim. Thus, mentoring programs have been proliferating over the past five years or so in a knowledge vacuum, with very little common meaning among practitioners and advocates, and no set of established best practices or operational lessons.

Specifically, we do not know whether these matches result in relationships akin to those that occur naturally, nor do we understand the processes through which programmatic relationships are developed and sustained, or the role of the program in their development. Because programmatic adult/youth relationships have not been studied, we know little about what makes them effective, or conversely, what makes them fail to develop or decline.

This study--the first product of P/PV's four-year research initiative on a variety of adult/youth relationships programs--was designed to examine the relationships formed between elders (ages 55 and older) and at-risk youth (ages 12 to 17) at four Linking Lifetimes intergenerational mentoring demonstration sites developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning. This study examined the activities of these pairs (what they do together and talk about), the relationship formation process (whether and how these relationships develop, how they are sustained, how and why they end), and their practices (what constitute effective and ineffective practices in these relationships).

P/PV interviewed participants of the Linking Lifetimes program in Springfield, Massachusetts, which serves young offenders; the Memphis program, which serves seventh- and eighth-grade teen mothers; and the Los Angeles and Miami programs, which target middle school youth living in high-risk neighborhoods. At each site, elders were required to meet at least weekly with their youth for between four and 10 hours. The elders received stipends, ranging from $2.20 to $6.00 per hour, and reimbursement for expenses.

We conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with youth and adults separately at all four sites at two points in time. The first interview, occurring when matches had been meeting an average of 3.5 months, was designed to explore the early stages of the relationship by examining participants' expectations and early interactions. In the second interview, conducted approximately nine months later, participants were asked to recall and describe critical incidents or memorable interactions with their partners that were either pleasant or unpleasant experiences. Thus, participants' feelings and behaviors were explored by examining points in the relationship that the participants identified as being significant. A total of 26 pairs are the focus of the analysis.

## IDENTIFYING SATISFIED PAIRS

The study is based on the hypothesis that in order for an adult volunteer's relationship with a youth to facilitate positive outcomes for that youth (e.g., improved school performance, increased prosocial behavior), an effective relationship must first develop. We define an effective relationship as having those characteristics that promote both pair members' satisfaction, thus providing evidence that a bond has been established. This study does not address whether effective or ineffective relationships influence outcomes for youth.* It is, rather, a systematic attempt to define the practices of effective relationships.

The first step was to characterize each of the 26 pairs as being either satisfied or dissatisfied with the relationship. Three indicators of satisfaction were developed, two of which were the same for adults and youth:

- Feelings of liking, attachment to, and commonality with the other member; and
- Commitment to the relationship, expressed as a desire to continue it.

The third indicator of satisfaction was assessed differently for youth and adults. For adults, this indicator was their perception of being appreciated or of making a difference in the youth's life. For youth, the indicator was the extent to which they viewed the mentor as a source of support. To establish this indicator, we examined both the mentor's and the youth's perceptions of what the mentor did and how the youth responded, and found that these perceptions were not necessarily the same. Matches were categorized as being satisfied or dissatisfied based on aggregate scores across these three dimensions.

## IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

Of the 26 pairs, 17 (roughly two-thirds) were identified as being satisfied, and nine matches (one-third) were identified as being dissatisfied. The 17 satisfied pairs were then compared with the nine dissatisfied pairs to determine if there were any differences in interaction in the following areas:

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* P/PV will address this question through its studies of eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, two pilot mentoring programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, and seven college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Partners in Learning.

- How often the matches met or talked by telephone, what they actually did together, and what they talked about; and
- Styles of interaction, defined as how the adult and youth carried out their interactions.

We found that the particular activities the pairs engaged in were not a determinant of satisfaction. Both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs met regularly (on average 1.5 times a week) and took part in similar activities--eating out together, going shopping, watching/participating in sporting events, and talking about school, family, etc.

Differences were discovered, however, in the participants' styles of interaction. In fact, one significant theme appears to underlie the styles of interaction that distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied pairs: in relationships where the elder and the youth reported satisfaction with the match, the elder was able to identify areas in which the youth needed help, and to find a way to address those areas in ways that the youth accepted. While the areas in which the youth required help varied, the style used in addressing them was consistent.

Elders in satisfied relationships allowed the relationships to be youth-driven in their content and timing. They waited for the youth to lower their defenses and to determine when and how trust would be established; and to signal if, when and in what way the divulgence of personal problems or challenges would occur--indeed, to define the mentor's role. This process lasted anywhere from weeks to months, with the elders trying to determine the needs of the youth by identifying their interests, to build trust in the relationship by taking those interests seriously, and to work on those areas in which the youth were most receptive to help.

For matches in which the participants were dissatisfied with their relationship, the reverse was true. The youth did not have a voice in determining the types of activities engaged in, and the elders were prescriptive in determining the areas in which they would help the youth. In these matches, a degenerative process began: the youth tended to "vote with their feet"--to not show up for meetings and to withdraw from the relationship.

While the patterns identified were not observed in every match, and could appear in both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs, our analysis focused on identifying those central tendencies of the relationships that were most consistently reported, and that served to distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Although no one match could be said to interact effectively in every way and none could be said to be completely ineffective, differences in styles of interaction were observed in the following areas: the adult's understanding of the youth's reluctance to trust; the adult's understanding of the youth's role in the relationship; the adult's emphasis on the youth's disclosure; the adult's methods of offering support and advice; the adult's attitudes toward the youth, based on the adult's perceptions of the youth's family, social class and culture; the adult's expectations for the relationship; and the adult's involvement with the youth's family.

## The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Reluctance to Trust

Adults in satisfied pairs were more likely than those in dissatisfied pairs to realize that these young people, like any other adolescents, would initially be reticent or reluctant to trust unfamiliar adults. Because the adolescents in these programs may have been disappointed by previous relationships with adults, most likely with their parents, these elders seemed to recognize that additional sensitivity was required and that the youth would need time to develop trust in the relationship.

According to the adults interviewed, the reluctance to trust was particularly evident during initial meetings. All the elders found the youth uncommunicative at first, and many times, the elders felt that they were talking to themselves. They reported that when the youth did talk, it was only to answer the adults' questions, and these responses were often monosyllabic or simple shrugs. However, mentors who were successful seemed to recognize the reason for this silence, and were able to avoid taking it personally. Instead, these elders considered possible reasons why the youth were not talking, and adjusted their expectations accordingly.

## The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Role in the Relationship

How the adults interpreted the youth's role in the relationship served to differentiate satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely to include the youth in determining both the activities that the pair would do together and the areas in which they would help the youth. These mentors were more likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities, and to select additional activities based on their youth's responsiveness. Conversely, elders in dissatisfied relationships were less likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities or consult the youth about the areas in which they needed help.

Adults who expressed satisfaction with their relationships chose to work through the youth's initial silence by assessing what the youth were willing and unwilling to do. The elders did this by listening closely to what the youth did say--the things the youth expressed interest in, activities they described as being fun, careers they wanted to pursue--then tailoring their activities to the youth's interests. By allowing the youth to determine the relationship's activities, the elders enabled the youth to determine the direction of the relationship--the linchpin of building the youth's trust.

While the elders waited for the youth to express their interests, the mentors learned through trial and error what the youth's interests were by observing how they responded to various activities that the mentors chose: going out to eat, going on outings, shopping, talking, etc. However, the youth's interests were not always recreational. For example, some mentors tried to design activities around their youth's career interests. And when youth in satisfied relationships expressed an interest in finding employment, their mentors helped them by driving them around town to interviews, and by introducing them to potential employers.

Mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely to follow the ineffective pattern of thinking the youth had no preferences for activities because the youth did not talk much, or not taking these preferences seriously--defining them as frivolous. Interestingly, the youth had no problem voicing their preferences to the interviewers.

### The Mentor's Emphasis on Disclosure

Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to realize that the youth might not be comfortable disclosing intimate details about their families or themselves to an unfamiliar adult. These mentors surmised that delving into the youth's private lives could be beyond the scope of their involvement, and instead waited for the youth to decide whether one of the mentor's roles would be as a confidante.

Conversely, the most common and critical mistake mentors in dissatisfied relationships made in attempting to establish close, trusting relationships was to begin the relationship with the activity that youth find most emotionally challenging, namely, by asking the youth to talk about those things that can be very difficult to discuss: poor school performance, criminal records, or dysfunctional or abusive family behaviors.

The youth did not appear to understand the importance of "having a good talk," and viewed their mentors' efforts to force disclosure quite negatively. Unfortunately, since these mentors viewed disclosure as an important criterion for establishing a successful relationship, they often continued to push while the youth continued to resist.

### Methods of Offering Support and Advice

How the mentor offered support and advice to the youth also differentiated satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely than adults in dissatisfied relationships to demonstrate their support, to respond to requests for help in a neutral and nonjudgmental manner, and to offer practical suggestions for solving problems.

Demonstrating support. Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to offer consistent reassurance and kindness by reminding the youth that they were available to talk at any time, and that they enjoyed their time with the youth. Mentors also demonstrated this reassurance and support through their actions. For example, one mentor visited and wrote letters to his youth when the youth was sentenced to a drug treatment program.

Suggesting how to solve problems. Once an adult did become aware of problems, either through the youth's disclosure or through observation of the youth, he or she could either judge and criticize the youth, or attempt to remain neutral and offer alternatives for solving the problems. Mentors in satisfied pairs typically chose the latter course of action, avoiding reprimands and judgments but offering instruction the youth defined as being useful.

For example, in the beginning of their relationships, most adults were faced with missed appointments and unanswered telephone calls. How the adults responded to this testing behavior was instrumental in the relationships' development. Elders in satisfied pairs were persistent with the youth, explaining how much they enjoyed their meetings and their desire for continuing in the program. These statements were coupled with practical suggestions for helping the youth to remember appointments. The youth in satisfied pairs who discussed family problems appreciated the mentors' assistance in negotiating relationships with family members. Their mentors provided them with strategies for getting through arguments that the youth implemented.

Criticizing and preaching. Mentors in dissatisfied pairs tended to be critical of their youth. The youth were very clear, as evidenced by their behaviors, that they would not tolerate their mentor's use of criticism, even if it was clear to them that the mentor did so in attempts to advise or instruct.

### The Adult's Attitudes Toward the Youth Based on Their Perceptions of the Youth's Family, Social Class and Culture

Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely than those in dissatisfied relationships to show awareness of the need to remain sensitive to the circumstances their youth grew up under. These mentors attempted to relate, on some level, to the experiences that their youth were going through--often by drawing on some event or feeling in their own lives. Mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely not to accept the youth for who they were or where they came from.

### The Adult's Expectations for the Relationship

Adults in satisfied pairs realized from the outset that the relationship would be one-directional: they were the givers and the youth were the recipients. They understood also that while there would be benefits from the relationship, the primary benefit--at least initially--would be that they were active and helping someone. These mentors tried to have realistic expectations about changes that might occur in the youth and to recognize that the youth showing up for meetings, expressing appreciation, and having a good time with them were all accomplishments. Mentors who expected that the gains of the relationship would be great--that they would establish a "mentoring" relationship where the youth outwardly esteemed and valued the mentor and the mentor transformed the youth--were typically very disappointed.

### The Adult's Involvement with the Youth's Family

All elders interviewed discussed the difficulty of establishing a relationship with the youth's family. Elders in satisfied relationships were more likely to inform the parents of the purpose of the program and their role in the youth's lives, making clear that they were not the parents' replacements. These elders appeared to respect the youth's family, but also understood that their relationships with the youth were primary--they knew that their relationships with the family had to be established through the youth. These mentors were careful to stay out of family arguments and distance themselves from discussing things with the parents so that the youth would not think or sense that they were "telling on" them. These elders were also more likely to select interactions with the youth's family carefully, and to not allow a parent to shape the relationship.

When mentors did extend their helping role to other members of the youth's family, they put their relationship with the youth at risk. One youth, for example, ran into a problem when her mentor revealed a confidence to the youth's guardian--a confidence that actually concerned the guardian. The mentor's attempt to aid the youth had the exact opposite result.

## PROGRAM PRACTICES THAT APPEAR TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVENESS

The fact that two-thirds of the matches were found to be effective is significant--it, in fact, leads us to believe that mentoring can be practiced not only by a few gifted adults, but by the majority of adults who come forward. However, given the difficulties programs encounter in recruiting volunteers (see Freedman, 1991), improvements in screening and training practices may improve this rate, thereby reducing the number of matches that fail and the risk of negative consequences for both youth and adults.

This report includes several recommendations for mentoring programs. While these recommendations are by no means definitive, they are based on participant interviews and conversations with program coordinators--in essence, the cumulative experiences of the four programs studied here.

The most important recommendations concern helping adults to establish youth-driven relationships. Since the majority of youth interviewed reported that they were interested in participating in the program to "go places," mentors could be encouraged initially to do just that, understanding the affective importance youth place on that activity. And since the goal of pairs experiencing effective interactions was for the adult to help the youth accomplish whatever they were interested in--going places, finding employment, learning life skills, learning to problem-solve, etc.--each volunteer could be told that following the youth's interests actually builds trust. Building trust is an important program goal, particularly since the adult volunteer may be the first person outside the youth's family that the youth will come to trust.

Volunteers could also receive training on active listening, a skill needed to understand the needs of the youth assigned to them, as well as problem-solving skills that the adults in turn could teach to the youth. Finally, the findings indicate that adults could benefit from ongoing training--throughout the course of the relationship--on setting expectations for the match and on establishing realistic expectations concerning how the relationship will progress. They should know that they will likely be frustrated initially, that the youth will be noncommunicative, and that they have support from program staff and other mentors to get through the initial and subsequent stages.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

It remains to be seen whether or not effective relationships can produce positive outcomes in youth's lives. Based on our initial observations, we have been impressed with the potential for the development of programmatic, constructive relationships between adult volunteers and youth. There is ample evidence, however, that such modest interventions as mentoring are unlikely in and of themselves to produce long-term outcomes for youth. (See Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992.)

But given the universal need youth have for developing caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of at-risk youth, interventions like mentoring can fill a significant need. We believe that well-implemented, programmatic relationships designed to address such a need play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of at-risk youth.

# I. UNDERSTANDING PROGRAMMATICALLY FACILITATED ADULT/YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS

The developmental stage known as adolescence involves numerous "tasks," all important for successful transition into adulthood. These tasks include the acquisition of identity and values; the development of competencies necessary for adult roles, such as the ability to make decisions and solve problems; and the development of competencies needed for social interaction with parents, peers and others, including the ability to develop friendships and working relationships through communication, cooperation, empathizing and negotiating (Dryfoos, 1990; Pittman and Wright, 1991).

According to Eric Erikson, however, the quintessential task of adolescence is identity formation. During adolescence, youth form their sense of identity based on past, current and potential relationships (Taylor, 1989). Adolescents, however, do not live in a single setting; rather, their families, schools, neighborhoods and communities provide multiple contexts in which adolescent development must occur (Sarigiani, Wilson, Peterson, and Vicary, 1990). Because all settings are sources for influential relationships, these social environments can have a decided effect on the content, duration and stressfulness of this period of transition (Taylor, 1989).

The family has primary responsibility for preparing children to take on adult roles, and is expected to do so through teaching conventional beliefs, values and patterns of behavior (Louv, 1990). In fact, research indicates that a significant relationship with a parent or other adult is a crucial contributor to healthy growth and development (Scales, 1991). However, young people are increasingly growing up without the support of significant adult figures. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development concluded that "many young people feel a desperate sense of isolation. Surrounded only by their equally confused peers, too many make poor decisions with harmful or lethal consequences" (Carnegie, 1989).[1]

Demographic trends and social patterns of work and living have reduced the number of responsible and caring adults an individual youth--particularly an at-risk youth--can easily reach out to for support and guidance. Today, only three in 10 American families fit the traditional pattern of homemaker and breadwinner (Louv, 1990), and family support has been eroded by the increasing number of children who grow up in single-parent house-holds--approximately 25 percent of all youth and over 50 percent of minority youth currently live in homes from which the father is absent. In addition, two in every five 10- to 14-year-olds moved during the past five years, almost half to a different county, indicating that today's youth must also deal with shifting environments (Dryfoos, 1990).

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[1] A number of earlier studies--most notably the volume written by James Coleman for the President's Science Advisory Committee (1974) and Michael Timpane's work in Youth Policy in Transition (1976)--noted that at-risk youth are growing up deprived of adult support. Current observers have also documented the absence of naturally occurring adult support for adolescents in our society, and the high price that is being paid for their growing isolation (Lipsitz, 1977; Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Hamburg, 1987).

Finally, a number of studies have concluded that there are a decreasing number of nonrelated adults in the inner cities who can provide consistent, positive social and emotional support to the increasing number of youth who need it. For instance, William Julius Wilson (1987) noted that "the isolation of low-income neighborhoods--where relatively few working adults reside, where youth gangs are especially strong and where the perils of substance abuse take an enormous toll--leave at-risk youth in greater danger with fewer supports than their counterparts in more affluent circumstances."

At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that our nation's programs for youth--schools, community programs, and employment and training programs--are neither attracting nor holding a significant share of youth who drop out of school and the labor market. Moreover, like the neighborhoods where these youth live, most publicly funded programs do not make adults available for personalized guidance and support. Their primary focus is on providing hard services. In the workplace, too, the goal is production, not youth development.

Thus, neither families, neighborhoods, publicly funded programs nor employers are providing sufficient adult guidance and support for the very youth who need them most. Many of these youth are becoming--as the William T. Grant Foundation's Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship (1988) terms it--"disconnected."

These disconnected youth are not a monolithic group. Their specific needs vary by age, sex, family setting, school status and other circumstances. Finding broad approaches that offer these diverse youth support, hope and greater self-sufficiency is an urgent, fundamental task for society and its caring institutions.

The question that inevitably arises is whether the vacuum created by major social forces can be filled by social interventions that provide supportive adult relationships for at-risk youth. Evidence suggests that the feasibility of these "mentoring" interventions may be a fruitful avenue for public policy to explore. A substantial body of work within social support theory supports the belief that programmatically facilitated relationships can produce many of the same benefits that derive from naturally occurring relationships (Gottlieb, 1988; Freedman, 1988; Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988). Young people themselves often cite an adult who came into their lives through the schools or a social program as the most positive influence in critical decisions, such as whether to remain in or drop out of school or an education/training program (P/PV's The Consumers' Perspective--At-Risk Youth Talk About Programs, 1989). And a longitudinal study that looked at hundreds of youth growing up in disturbed family situations concluded that those youth who were able to form relationships with adults outside of home and institutional settings were the most likely to have successful careers and family lives (Werner and Smith, 1982).

Based on these observations, the concept of mentoring has recently been embraced by many social programs. However, mentoring programs have proliferated greatly over the past five years or so in a knowledge vacuum. Mentoring holds little common meaning for practitioners and advocates, and there is no established set of best practices or operational lessons. Despite the frequent call for adults to mentor youth, there is very little systematically collected information on effective adult/youth relationships in programmatic settings, and only occasionally have the potential drawbacks been explored.

Research in the area of nonparental, programmatic adult/youth relationships is limited and offers little insight in attempting to characterize the quality, nature and potential impact of relationships (Foster-Clark and Blyth, 1989). Specifically, research on mentoring rarely includes the perspectives of both the mentor and the youth, but focuses primarily on the youth's recollections (Flaxman et al., 1988). Finally, in research on youth programming in general, the perspectives of youth participants are often overlooked in defining research questions and determining effective practices for youth-serving programs (Galbo, 1989).

Understanding effective adult/youth relationships is important for a number of reasons. First, if mentoring is to be a viable component of youth programming, it must be determined whether effective relationships with youth can be formed only by a few gifted adults or by the majority of adult volunteers who come forward. Second, if such relationships do develop, their practices must be identified. Defining the nature of the adult role--its specific practices and time commitments--can enable local agencies and groups wishing to implement mentoring programs to benefit from prior experience. Finally, understanding how program practices--training, matching and supervision--affect relationship development and continuity can assist practitioners in designing programs that can best promote effective relationships.

Thus, to understand effective programmatic adult/youth relationships and their possible effects, they must be examined from both the adult's and the youth's perspectives and understood in the broader context of the participants' lives (Merriam, 1983). P/PV has designed a series of studies to explore programmatic relationships by examining the pair members' interactions; the personal characteristics of both the adult and the youth participants; and the relationships' duration and stages. Specifically, the following questions are addressed:

- What happens in programmatic adult/youth relationships? What do the pairs do together? What do they talk about?

- How do relationships develop and how are they sustained? How and why do they end?

- Do pair members provide emotional support or instrumental (providing a service) support?
- What interactions are associated with participants' satisfaction? With participants' dissatisfaction?
- How do program-facilitated relationships fit in with a youth's existing relationships?

## A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FOUR LINKING LIFETIMES PROGRAMS

In an effort to address these research questions, P/PV conducted a study to identify and characterize the relationships that formed between elders (ages 55 and older) and at-risk youth (ages 12 to 17) at four intergenerational mentoring demonstration sites.[2] This study represents the first step toward identifying and quantifying characteristics of programmatically facilitated relationships. This, in turn, is also seen as an important step toward understanding whether nonrelated adults can facilitate positive results sought in interventions for at-risk youth (improved school performance, attendance, relationships with family and peers, self-esteem, etc.) and, eventually, being able to specify the kinds of relationships that are associated with different results.[3]

### The Linking Lifetimes Initiative

The four intergenerational mentoring programs are part of the Linking Lifetimes initiative, created by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning in 1989 to promote the systematic development of programs that provide support to vulnerable youth while simultaneously enabling older adults to remain productive members of society. The overall mission of this initiative is to demonstrate the effectiveness of using elder mentors to help at-risk youth and young offenders become productive and self-reliant members of society. To achieve this goal, 11 organizations serving at-risk youth and/or the elderly were awarded grants to develop and implement intergenerational mentoring programs.

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[2] This qualitative study is one of two studies of the Linking Lifetimes initiative. Lodestar Management/Research, under contract to the Academy for Educational Development's National Institute for Work and Learning, is conducting a structured, multiyear evaluation of the 11 programs. As part of this evaluation, Lodestar has developed a management information system to collect information on program participants. A series of intake, six-month follow-up and exit forms for mentors and youth, and monthly assessment forms completed by the program coordinator and mentors are used to document participant characteristics, interaction and youth outcomes.

[3] In addition to the four Linking Lifetimes programs, P/PV is conducting similar studies at eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, at two pilot mentoring programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated to the juvenile justice system, and at four college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Compact's Campus Partners in Learning to understand the similarities and differences in relationships across mentoring programs.

The Linking Lifetimes initiative is supported by the Burden, Edna McConnell Clark, H.W. Durham, Ittleson and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations, the Exxon Fund for Productive Aging, and a variety of local foundations. Its programs' annual budgets range from $50,000 to $120,000. As the creator of the initiative, Temple's Center for Intergenerational Learning receives funding to provide training and technical assistance to the demonstration sites.

Linking Lifetimes programs target at-risk youth in middle school, i.e., those who are in danger of dropping out and/or exhibit problem behavior; and youth 11 to 21 years of age who have appeared before the court for a criminal offense. These youth are paired with persons 55 years of age or older who are willing to invest time and effort in a young person's future. Table 1 provides the names and locations of these programs.

P/PV interviewed participants at four of the eight sites that began operation in early 1990: the Springfield program, which serves young offenders; the Memphis program, which serves seventh- and eighth-grade teen mothers; and the Los Angeles and Miami programs, which target middle school youth living in high-risk neighborhoods. At the time of the study, these programs were less than five months into operation, and involved a total of 33 mentors and 52 youth. Table 2 describes these programs and the participants.

At each site, elder mentors are required to meet with youth at least weekly. In Memphis, a Foster Grandparent program, the foster grandmothers are expected to volunteer at the school for four hours a day during school, attending two classes per day with each youth assigned to them and taking part in a one-hour weekly group meeting with the students. In the other three sites, adult volunteers meet with their youth outside of school for between four and 10 hours each week. In all four programs, adult volunteers receive a stipend ranging from $2.20 to $6.00 an hour and expenses. (Appendix A offers a more detailed description of the four programs and the Linking Lifetimes program model.)

Programs like Linking Lifetimes have identified the older adult population as a potentially important resource for assisting youth for three reasons. First, the elderly population is steadily growing, with more than 28 million Americans--about 12 percent of the population--now over the age of 65. Senior citizens could represent over 20 percent of

## TABLE 1. LINKING LIFETIMES INITIATIVE SITES

### At-Risk Youth Sites

Juvenile Welfare Board
St. Petersburg, FL

Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development
Miami, FL

Neighborhood Youth Association
Los Angeles, CA

North American Indian Association
Detroit, MI

Porter Leath Children's Center
Memphis, TN

School/Business Collaborative*
Hartford, CT

Washington Urban League
Washington, DC

### Youth Offender Sites

Corporation for Public Management
Springfield, MA

Innovative Resources*
Birmingham, AL, and Elmore County, AL

National Center for Institutions and Alternatives
Syracuse, NY

*No longer operating

## TABLE 2. LINKING LIFETIMES STUDY SITE DESCRIPTIONS

| | SITES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Characteristics: | Springfield | Memphis | Los Angeles | Miami |
| Participants | 8 mentors<br>11 youth | 10 mentors<br>26 youth | 6 mentors<br>6 youth | 9 mentors<br>9 youth |
| Youth: | | | | |
| Target Population | 14 to 17 yrs. old, adjudicated offenders | 14 to 17 yrs. old, teen mothers attending alternative school | 12 to 14 yrs. old, living in high-risk neighborhoods | 12 to 14 yrs. old, living in public housing projects |
| Sex | 10 male<br>1 female | 0 male<br>26 female | 4 male<br>2 female | 3 male<br>6 female |
| Race | 0 black<br>8 white<br>3 Hispanic | 24 black<br>2 white<br>0 Hispanic | 1 black<br>0 white<br>5 Hispanic | 6 black<br>1 white<br>2 Hispanic |
| Adult Volunteers: | | | | |
| Target Population | Retired professionals | Foster Grandparent Program volunteers | Retired professionals | Retired professionals/housing project residents |
| Sex | 6 male<br>2 female | 0 male<br>10 female | 3 male<br>3 female | 2 male<br>7 female |
| Race | 3 black<br>5 white<br>0 Hispanic | 10 black<br>0 white<br>0 Hispanic | 1 black<br>3 white<br>2 Hispanic | 4 black<br>3 white<br>2 Hispanic |
| Age | 55-73 | 63-83 | 64-83 | 65-73 |
| Study Sample | 7 mentors<br>7 youth<br>7 pairs | 7 mentors<br>7 youth<br>7 pairs | 6 mentors<br>6 youth<br>6 pairs | 6 mentors<br>6 youth<br>6 pairs |
| Requirements | 6 hrs./week | 20 hrs./week | 10 hrs./week | 4 hrs./week |
| Mentor Stipend | $6/hr. and $.21/mile | $2.20/hr. and lunch | $4.25/hr. and expenses | $10/week |
| Program Operator | Corporation for Public Management | Porter Leath Children's Center | Neighborhood Youth Association | Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development |

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the population by the year 2030, when the post-World War II baby-boom generation reaches retirement (DeVita, 1989).

Second, for many elders, volunteerism has been an effective and meaningful way to create new social networks and regain a sense of purpose and self-esteem while making a contribution to others. A 1982 Louis Harris and Associates poll estimated that 5.9 million elders, almost one-fourth of the over-65 population, were doing volunteer work of some kind. An additional 2.1 million said that although they were not currently doing volunteer work, they would like to. Many find in volunteering a sense of purpose lost at retirement or, conversely, a long-awaited opportunity to engage in work more meaningful to them than their preretirement occupations (Chambre, 1987).

Finally, many observers already believe that elders are particularly well-suited for the mentoring task. In 1988, P/PV completed its Partners in Growth study (Freedman, 1988), which focused on five grassroots programs that paired older adults with teenage mothers who were parenting in isolation, youthful offenders in alternative sentencing programs and students in danger of dropping out of school. These programs employed low-income seniors in the federal Foster Grandparent Program, retirees from several labor unions, and older volunteers from the community.

This exploratory study found that strong relationships were formed by a significant number of pairs--approximately two-thirds of the pairs; that the elders who volunteered were frequently looking for stimulating and productive activity; and that the youth, often in crisis and without significant adult support or involvement in their lives, welcomed the elders' interest. The complementary needs of the elders and youth powered the formation of relationships, and the mutual benefits described by participants underscored the reciprocal nature of the bonds.

## Methodology

Face-to-face semistructured interviews were conducted separately with youth and adults at all four sites at two points in time. At each site, interviews were conducted during a three- to four-day span when two P/PV interviewers were on site. Almost all interviews were scheduled by the program coordinators, conducted in the program offices, and recorded on tape; the elder interviews lasted an average of 1.5 hours and the youth interviews lasted about 45 minutes. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Because not all matches were created at the same time, the first interviews involved youth and elders who had been meeting anywhere from one month to six months, with the average length of match being approximately 3.5 months. This first interview was designed to explore the early stages of the relationship by tapping participants' expectations and examining early interactions. During the interview, participants were asked open-ended questions about key processes of the relationship, such as talking, disclosing information, making joint decisions and arguing. Although research on relationships tends to use these behaviors alone to define relationships (Duck and Pond, 1989), this study also used participants' perceptions, attitudes and feelings toward their partners and the relationship as data sources.

The second interview occurred approximately nine months later, when matches were 10 to 15 months old. By this time, the relationships had had the time to progress, remain unchanged or dissolve. In this interview, participants were asked to recall critical incidents or memorable interactions with his/her partner that were either pleasant or unpleasant experiences, and were then asked questions about these incidents. Thus, participants' feelings and behaviors were explored by examining points in the relationship that they themselves identified as significant.

The data collected represented 52 matches, or all matches participating in the four programs at the time of the first site visits. However, due to the large amount of data collected--117 transcripts with more than 500 pages of text--the research focuses on only 26 of the matches: six each from Miami and Los Angeles, and seven each from Springfield and Memphis. Because this analysis was intended to help us understand the dynamics of relationships across time, the research focused on 16 of 17 pairs where both the youth and the mentor had been interviewed twice. However, because this study is also concerned with the processes and dimensions of relationships at a given point in time, it also focused on nine of 15 pairs for which cross-sectional data were obtained from one pair member and longitudinal data were obtained from the other, and on one of two pairs where both the adult and the youth in the pair were interviewed once (in this case, at the time of the first interviews). Of these 26 matches, 19 pairs were of the same race (six white, 11 black, and two Hispanic) and seven pairs were of different races (two matched a black mentor with a Hispanic youth, two a white mentor with a black youth, and three a white mentor with a Hispanic youth). Ten of the pairs were male, 14 were female, and two matched a female mentor with male youth.

The pairs were then grouped by participants' satisfaction with the relationship. Interviews with participants who expressed satisfaction (17 matches) and those who expressed dissatisfaction (nine matches) were separately examined to determine common behavioral and other attitudinal characteristics. (See Appendix B for a full description of the methodology.)

This report documents findings from these examinations. Chapter II details the pairs' patterns of interaction--what adult volunteers and youth do and talk about together, and what these interactions mean to the participants. Both effective and ineffective patterns in the pairs' interactions are identified and discussed. Chapter III focuses on the elders' involvement in the youth's families. Finally, Chapter IV discusses how to characterize relationships and provides recommendations for improving programmatically facilitated relationships.

Appendix A offers a more detailed description of the Linking Lifetimes program model and the four programs under study. Appendix B provides a complete description of the methodology.

# II. PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

In an attempt to understand programmatically facilitated adult/youth relationships in youth-serving programs, this study examines 26 mentoring pairs participating in four intergenerational programs. Since little evidence exists concerning what actually happens in such relationships, this study provides a detailed profile. Specifically, we examine how often the elder and youth meet, what they talk about, what they do together, and the length of these interactions; we also consider the antitheses of these behaviors--how often the elder and youth miss meetings, what subjects they do not discuss, and what activities they do not do together.

However, because research on relationships tends to use these behaviors alone to describe relationships (Duck and Pond, 1989), we examine the meanings the youth and adults ascribe to behaviors to help us determine what is and is not valued in the interactions. Specifically, we examine pair members' feelings about their activities in the relationship and about each other--how attached they are to their partner (focusing on any indication of closeness or likeability); how much they trust each other; the youth's perceptions of support received and the adult's perceptions of support given; pair members' perceptions of decision-making in the relationship; and their overall satisfaction with the relationship.

Moreover, we do not know whether these matches result in relationships akin to those that occur naturally, nor do we understand the processes through which programmatic relationships are developed and sustained, or the role of the program in their development. Because programmatic adult/youth relationships have not been studied, we know little about what makes them effective, or conversely, what makes them fail to develop or decline.

To address the lack of data in these areas, this study identifies those practices or interactions that appear to promote both a relationship's development or decline. We identified effective and ineffective practices based on the participants' perceptions of and satisfaction with the relationship. Thus, the categorization of each of the 26 pairs as being either satisfied or dissatisfied with the relationship was a key feature of the study.

## PARTICIPANTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE RELATIONSHIP

Three indicators of satisfaction were developed, two of which were the same for adults and youth:

- Feelings of liking, attachment to, and commonality with the other member; and
- Commitment to the relationship, expressed as a desire to continue it.

The third indicator of satisfaction was assessed differently for youth and adults. For adults, this indicator was their perception of being appreciated or of making a difference in the youth's life. For youth, the indicator was the extent to which they viewed the mentor as a source of support. To establish this indicator, we examined both the mentors' and youth's perceptions of what the mentor did and how the youth responded, and found that these perceptions were not necessarily the same. Pairs were then scored on a scale of zero to six, with the 17 pairs scoring above the midpoint (more than three points) defined as being satisfied with the match, and the nine pairs scoring below the midpoint (three points or less) defined as being dissatisfied with the match. Pairs were then analyzed to identify patterns of interaction characteristic of each type of match. (See Appendix B for a full description of the methodology.)

Because the status of the match--i.e., whether the match was still considered to be in the program--was not always voluntary, participants' satisfaction with the match proved to be the most important criterion in developing this analytical framework. As Table 3 illustrates, of the 26 matches under study, 14 were ongoing and 12 had been terminated by the program. Of the 12 matches terminated by the program, six were terminated at the request of the elder, the youth or the youth's family. The remaining six were Memphis matches in which the teen mother or, in one case, the foster grandmother had transferred to a new school, thus ending formal participation in the program. Of these six matches, five expressed satisfaction with the relationship, with one pair continuing to have weekly telephone contact. Therefore, in the case of Memphis matches, a terminated match did not necessarily constitute a discontinued or unsatisfactory relationship in the eyes of the participants.

Further, of the 14 ongoing matches, three satisfied pairs had not met in a number of weeks due to reasons external to the match: one mentor had experienced a death in the family, one youth had enrolled in a residential program, and one youth had recently moved. In addition, three other adults in satisfied, ongoing relationships were in the process of reducing or ending their involvement in the program. Conversely, in two relationships where the youth reported dissatisfaction with the match, the pairs continued to meet, though one mentor had decided to reduce his involvement. Thus, pairings had been discontinued that were satisfying to the participants, while some pairs who were dissatisfied continued to meet. Typically, however, satisfaction was related to relationship longevity, with seven of the nine dissatisfied pairs having ended their relationship.

Female pairs were more likely to be satisfied than male pairs--11 female pairs were satisfied and three were dissatisfied, compared with five satisfied and five dissatisfied male pairs. Of the two cross-gender pairs, one was satisfied and one was dissatisfied.

### TABLE 3. STATUS OF THE MATCH BY RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

| STATUS | SATISFIED | DISSATISFIED | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| ONGOING | 12 | 2 | 14 |
| Meeting regularly | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Not meeting for external reasons | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Adult reducing program involvement | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| TERMINATED | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| Terminated by request | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Youth/foster grandmother no longer at school | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 17 | 9 | 26 |

## PATTERNS OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE INTERACTION

Participants who were satisfied with their relationships were compared with those who were dissatisfied to determine any differences in interaction in the following areas:

- Activities of the participants, defined as how often the matches meet or talk by telephone, what they do together, and what they talk about; and

- Styles of interaction, defined as how the adult and the youth carry out their interactions--e.g., the youth's role in decision-making, how often the pair members argue and how those conflicts are resolved, how often the adult criticizes or praises the youth, etc.

Like all relationships, those discussed here are dynamic, ever-changing and intricate (Duck and Pond, 1989). Not surprisingly, participants' perceptions of the relationships are not always consistent, with members of the same pair providing information that appears at times to be contradictory. Thus, the analysis focused on identifying those central tendencies of the relationships that were most consistently reported, and that served to distinguish satisfied pairs from dissatisfied pairs. All the central tendencies were not observed in every match, and may appear in both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs. Therefore, no one match could be said to interact effectively in every way and none could be said to be completely ineffective. While the discussion that follows at times focuses on the perceptions of several "key informants," or pair members who appear to best articulate and illustrate patterns, the accompanying tables show that the analysis is based on a larger sample exhibiting those same patterns.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4 provides a cross-tabulation of dissatisfied and satisfied pairs and their activities in the relationship. As the table shows, no dramatic differences were found between satisfied and dissatisfied pairs in terms of how often they meet, what they do together or what they talk about. The following sections discuss these findings.

### How Often They Meet

Both youth and adults were asked questions about how long they had been meeting, how often they typically met, and the location of those meetings. Based on their responses, the findings indicate that both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs in Miami, Los Angeles and Springfield pairs met, on average, 1.5 times per week. The length of these meetings varied--if pairs met only once a week, their meetings lasted, on average, five hours; if they met twice a week, the meetings typically lasted 2.5 hours. Longer meetings allowed the combining of activities, such as eating out and going to a movie, whereas shorter meetings typically allowed for just one activity, such as going to a fast food restaurant or a local mall.

## TABLE 4. ACTIVITIES MENTIONED BY PARTICIPANTS BY RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

| ACTIVITIES (excludes group activities) | NUMBER OF MATCHES | |
|---|---|---|
| | SATISFIED (n = 17) | DISSATISFIED (n = 9) |
| Eat together | 10 | 5 |
| Job hunt | 4 | 2 |
| Watch movies | 6 | 3 |
| Go to mentor's house | 9 | 4 |
| Watch/participate in sports | 6 | 3 |
| Go to parks | 3 | 3 |
| Go shopping | 7 | 1 |
| Go to museums/library | 4 | 2 |
| Talk about school | 12 | 9 |
| Talk about families | 13 | 6 |
| Talk about opposite sex/dating | 7 | 4 |
| Talk about future/careers | 6 | 2 |

In Memphis, a school-based mentoring program, the foster grandmothers are available to meet with the teen mothers and assist in the nursery for four hours a day during school hours, five days a week, and are required to attend two classes a day with each of the students they are matched with (each foster grandmother was matched with at least two youth). All participants also attend a one-hour weekly group meeting, which is part of the students' class schedules.[4] The Memphis pairs averaged the shortest time per meeting, with both elders and youth stating that there was not ample time to meet during the course of the school day. For example, one grandmother and a youth who was matched with each her reported the following:

> There's not too much talking I can do in the classroom. And I really try to get another time set aside. Now the only time that I can have alone mostly with her is at lunch time. And by the time that she comes in at lunch time, it's about time for us [the foster grandmothers] to go back.
>
> Our classes are like five minutes apart, sometimes 10, so it's hard trying to talk to her when you're trying to go to your locker to get some books.

Although the Memphis program reserved the one-hour meeting for group activities, where the pairs worked on arts and crafts projects, the foster grandmothers reported that since they were matched with more than one student, the setting was not conducive for meaningful conversations. One grandmother characterized these meetings as follows:

> All of us would be in there, the children, the girls and the grandmoms. And they didn't have but one pair of scissors and you know, this one and that one wanted them. It was kind of burdensome you know, into that 30 minutes that you're working with them...[it was] pretty hard because of so many of us in the room. And sometimes you can't hear your own self.

Memphis matches were more likely to meet in the nursery, and while that time enabled the youth and grandmothers to talk, the majority of time was devoted to caring for the babies.

Pairs in the other three programs had less difficulty finding sufficient time to meet; since most youth were enrolled in school, they typically met on either Saturday or Sunday. When the youth were not enrolled in school, meeting times were more flexible, occurring in both the morning and the afternoon during the week. Elders thought that it was important to meet at the same time each week, particularly when participants did not have telephones, so that the youth could always count on meeting at least weekly.

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[4] This report refers to the program's operations at the time of the site visits. Since the time of these site visits, the Memphis program model has been modified to include more individual meetings outside of school hours.

Telephone contact was typically reserved for arranging meeting times and determining activities for the meetings. However, seven satisfied matches also reported at least weekly telephone contact, through which the mentor and the youth would update each other on the events of the week. Due to the lack of time to meet during the school day, matches in Memphis were most likely to sustain this type of contact. In fact, one pair whose status was discontinued by the program because the youth transferred to a new school continued to maintain telephone contact three times a week into the new school year, with the youth contacting the mentor. The mentor reported that their "best contact is over the telephone," stating "I don't know how she really feels about me, but I think...it must be something because she keeps up with me."

## What They Do Together

Participants were also asked questions about what they do together as a match and as participants in the program's group activities. While group activities included watching movies, going to museums, sharing meals together, going to the mall, exploring career opportunities, and going to parks, this analysis focuses on those activities that the mentors and youth selected to do on their own. The activities listed in Table 4 are those mentioned by either the mentor or the youth.

### Eating

The majority of participants in both satisfied and dissatisfied relationships spent time eating together, either with the elders preparing dinner in their homes, or with the youth and adult going out to either fast food restaurants or what participants described as "nicer" restaurants--places the youth usually had never been before.

The elders offered a number of reasons they planned activities that involved eating together. First, elders reported that they viewed mealtimes as the perfect time for conversation. For example, one elder explained that in his experience, eating together offered the opportunity to talk:

> Being a businessman, I settle an awful lot of business over meals. And a married person, a lot of things you're doing at the dinner table. He does not enjoy a meal [with his family], they don't eat together.

The elders realized that because the youth might not be accustomed to sitting down with their families at home for a meal, the activity of eating could be used as an approach for talking with and subsequently getting to know the youth. Ten elders tried to make these meals meaningful to the youth. One elder explained:

> When we eat at my house, I always try to make it real special and elaborate and everything. And she's very helpful, she helps me set the table and carry the dishes back and forth, really nice.

The elders felt that this activity exposed the youth to a custom that the elders had grown up practicing. It also provided the youth with a needed meal. The majority of the youth come from low-income families, and since the youth are also growing teenagers, the elders believed the youth would welcome a meal:

> Eating is a very important part of what we do because she doesn't get fed very well at home. So nutrition is something that we talk about, and calories, because she's a teenager.

### Other Activities

A range of other activities were also discussed, including watching movies on television or at a movie theater, going job-hunting, going to museums and the library, going to the elder's house to play cards or board games, going to amusement or recreational parks, watching or participating in sporting activities, and shopping. Girls were more likely to spend time shopping with their elders, while boys and their elders were more likely to spend time outside--going for rides in the car, going to the park, and participating in or watching sporting events. Older youth, particularly in Springfield, were more likely than others to spend time job-hunting. As Table 4 illustrates, both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs took part in these activities.

### Talking

Both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs reported that they talked mostly about school, with the adults frequently emphasizing the importance of education and encouraging the youth to remain in school, or reenroll in school if they had dropped out, and plan for life after high school. Both adults and youth in satisfied and dissatisfied relationships talked about the youth's career aspirations, finding activities that focused on the youth's expressed career interests. For example, two elders introduced their youth to adults whose professions matched the youth's interests. Elders also visited colleges with their youth to demonstrate that a college education was attainable and possible:

> And then, of course, we talked about college...which is not good enough. You have to be there. So, we spent the day at the university. We took a tour with one of the students, who explained everything all over the school. We bought lunch and sat on the grass, and ate our lunch, and watched the kids going back and forth to class, and all of this made her feel that "Here I am. This is a possibility."

Youth also discussed problems that they were having in school, focusing primarily on attendance, problems with teachers and low grades.

Both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs also discussed the youth's families, with these conversations ranging from the youth mentioning different family members to discussing family problems. Conversations about family problems were less frequent, but typically involved the adolescent's relationship with his/her mother or guardian. Youth in both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs did mention boyfriends or girlfriends to the elders, with a few choosing to discuss problems they experienced in these relationships. However, a number of youth did not want to discuss dating relationships, and were also reluctant to discuss sexual activity or drug use with the elders.

## STYLES OF INTERACTION

Although no discernible differences were detected concerning participants' activities in the relationship, with participants in both satisfied and dissatisfied matches meeting at least weekly and taking part in similar activities, differences were discovered in the mentors' styles of interaction. In fact, one significant theme appears to underlie the styles of interaction that distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied pairs: in relationships where the elder and the youth reported satisfaction with the match, the elder was able to identify areas in which the youth needed help; either the youth revealed these areas or the elder discovered them on his/her own. The elders were then able to find a way to address those needs in ways that the youth accepted.

The key to identifying the youth's needs was that the elders allowed these relationships to be youth-driven in their content and timing--the elders waited for the youth to lower their defenses and to determine when trust was established in the relationship. The elders allowed the youth to signal if, when and how the divulgence of personal problems or challenges would occur. Elders also allowed the youth's preferences to determine their activities together, particularly in early meetings. The elders then modified their roles according to the expressed wants and needs of the youth.

For matches in which the participants were dissatisfied with their relationship, the reverse was true. These youth did not have a voice in determining the types of activities engaged in, and the elders were prescriptive in determining the areas in which they would help the youth. In these matches, a degenerative process began: the youth tended to "vote with their feet"--to not show up for meetings and to withdraw from the relationship.

Table 5 provides a cross-tabulation of mentors' styles of interaction among dissatisfied and satisfied pairs. As the table shows, differences in styles of interaction were observed in the following areas: the adult's understanding of the youth's reluctance to trust; the adult's understanding of the youth's role in the relationship; the adult's emphasis on the youth's disclosure; the adult's methods of offering support and advice; and the adult's attitudes toward the youth, based on perceptions of the youth's family, social class and culture. The following sections discuss these different styles of interaction.

## TABLE 5. MENTOR'S STYLE OF INTERACTION BY RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

| MENTOR'S STYLE OF INTERACTION | SAMPLE SIZE | NUMBER OF MATCHES EXHIBITING PATTERN | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | SATISFIED | DISSATISFIED |
| Understood the youth's reluctance to trust | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 15 | 3 |
| Viewed the relationship as being one-directional | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 17 | 2 |
| Took the youth's interests seriously | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 16 | 2 |
| Forced disclosure | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 3 | 7 |
| Offered reassurance | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 17 | 4 |
| Offered help that the youth appreciated | Satisfied = 12<br>Dissatisfied = 3 | 11 | 1 |
| Criticized the youth | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 2 | 8 |
| Attempted to relate to the youth's experience | Satisfied = 17<br>Dissatisfied = 9 | 11 | 2 |
| Attempted to understand the youth's family | Satisfied = 14<br>Dissatisfied = 8 | 12 | 1 |

## The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Reluctance to Trust

Although the term "at-risk" is difficult to define and carries numerous connotations, the youth involved in these programs meet the definition of being at high risk of engaging in multiple problem behaviors, such as failing in or dropping out of school, being substance abusers, having early unprotected intercourse, and participating in criminal behavior (Dryfoos, 1990). In fact, at the time of the second interview, five of the 26 youth interviewed had dropped out of school, five other youth reported having been suspended from school, eight youth were parents, and seven had been involved in the juvenile justice system. Further, all but two youth had experienced the death, disappearance, or protracted absence of a parent, with 14 youth reporting the divorce of their parents and six additional youth reporting the death of a parent. Elders and/or program coordinators often reported difficulties in the youth's families; at least five youth at some point moved away from home temporarily or permanently, and four youth reported drug or alcohol abuse by a parent.

Adults who were satisfied in their relationships were more likely than those who were dissatisfied to realize that these young people, like any other adolescents, would be reticent or reluctant to trust unfamiliar adults. Because the adolescents in these programs may have been disappointed by previous relationships with adults, most likely with their parents, these elders seemed to recognize that additional sensitivity was required and that the youth would need time to develop trust in the relationship.

One mentor tried to be sensitive to his youth's wariness of adults. As a young child, the youth's mother gave him to his grandmother to raise. Ten years later, she took the youth back:

> It just takes time, you know...I didn't know how he was treated, like with his mother just giving him up and then, when he was settled, pulling him back: like [a] here it is and here it isn't kind of thing...just like a piece of nothing. [In his mind, he was probably looking at me and thinking,]...are you another person that's going to come here and take me to the moon and two minutes from now I can't remember your name...I don't trust anybody. Why should I trust you? You say you're good. Whoopie!

According to the adults interviewed, youth's reluctance to trust them was particularly evident during initial meetings. The elders often discussed the first challenge to building a relationship--talking to the youth. All the elders found the youth to be uncommunicative at first, and many times the elders felt that they were talking to themselves. They reported that when the youth did talk, it was only to answer questions, and these responses were often monosyllabic or simple shrugs. The elders felt frustrated by this apparent unwillingness to talk, as the following quotations illustrate:

> He made you feel like you didn't belong at all...[He gave no] recognition of his being interested...I don't feel he's even listening, that I'm boring him, you know.
>
> I mean it's just the non-answering that gets to you.

However, 15 of the 17 adults in pairs who reported satisfaction, and only three of the nine adults in relationships in which they and/or the youth reported dissatisfaction seemed to recognize the reason for this silence, and were able to distance themselves from it, without taking the youth's unwillingness or inability to converse personally. Instead, these elders considered reasons the youth might not talk easily, and adjusted their expectations accordingly. For example, one mentor felt that because his youth was part of the juvenile justice system and had recently been released from detention--where he was told when to get up, when to go to bed, etc.--the youth now had difficulty making simple decisions:

> They don't talk--[I ask] what do you want to do. Like today, what do you want? Do you want to sit outside, doesn't answer, can't make up his mind. Four years with DYS (the Department of Youth Services), you're not asked, you're told. So I mean a simple decision like what do you want.

Another mentor realized that the youth assigned to him had many adults in his life telling him what to do, and the youth could easily perceive the mentor as being another authority figure:

> And I guess a lot of these kids, they're shuffled to foster homes....they have more and more people in their life than they need, you know. So here I was just another thorn in his side...just one more person to aggravate him or tell him what to do.

Another mentor felt that the youth she was matched with was just quiet, and realized that the silence had nothing to do with her. Finally, a fourth mentor recognized that her youth had had negative experiences with adults and was less likely to trust yet another one:

> I think she's probably one of the more troubled kids who really needs some psychotherapy, you know...her family situation has been so bad. And she is so well-defended. She has such a thick defense...and has been hurt so much, that she doesn't relate to adults.

These elders understood that in working to build trusting relationships, they as adults would be primarily responsible. They further understood that the youth's interpretation of their words and actions would essentially determine the relationship's progression. Often, these adults had to exercise considerable patience in waiting for youth to overcome their hesitance and develop trust; this process took weeks, even months. One mentor waited a full 10 months before the youth gave any indication that the time spent together was important or pleasurable to him.

All the mentors in satisfied relationships and only one of the mentors in dissatisfied relationships realized from the outset that the relationship would be one-directional. They were the givers and the youth were the recipients. They understood also that while they would derive benefits from the relationship, the primary benefit--at least initially--would be that they were actively helping someone. One mentor explained that she wanted to participate in the program so that "you are the other person in their life that they can feel comfortable with and they can feel free to talk to you."

## The Adult's Understanding of the Youth's Role in the Relationship

How the adults interpreted the youth's role in the relationship served to differentiate satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely to include their youth in determining both the activities that the match would do together and the areas where the mentor would help the youth. These mentors were more likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities, and to select additional activities based on the youth's responsiveness. Conversely, elders in dissatisfied relationships were less likely to follow their youth's suggestions for activities or consult the youth about the areas where they would help the youth. It is interesting to note that the youth did appear to play a significant role in both satisfied and dissatisfied relationships--the youth could determine the relationship's continuance by either cooperating or not cooperating with the adult.

### Choosing Activities Effectively

Sixteen of the 17 adults who expressed satisfaction with their relationships and only two of the nine adults in dissatisfied relationships chose to work through the youth's initial silence and the time the youth took to dissolve their defenses by assessing what the youth were willing and unwilling to do. The elders did this by listening closely to what the youth had to say--the things the youth expressed interest in, activities they described as being fun, careers they wanted to pursue, etc.--and finding activities that addressed those interests. By allowing the youth to determine the relationship's activities, the elders enabled the youth to determine the direction of the relationship.

In cases where youth were uncommunicative at first, the elders struggled in determining the youth's interests, and expressed their frustration about this:

> When I'm with these youngsters, I say now look, I want you to think about our date...and I say think of something you feel you want to do. If there's something that you really would like to do, tell me and we'll do it, if it's within the bounds of my ability. They kind of welcome that when you say

> it, but I think it's dropped and then when you meet them you say by the way, did you think about doing something--no.

Because the majority of the youth were reluctant to express their interests, active listening became a necessary skill for these adults. When the youth did decide to talk about their interests, their elders were ready and waiting to listen:

> A lot of times you talk, but a lot of times you have to keep your ears open. That's when you find out what's going on. What their interests are and what their desires are and what their problems are, and I tried to attack some of them.

While the elders waited for the youth to express their interests, they took the initiative, learning through trial and error how the youth responded to various activities: going out to eat, going on outings, shopping, talking, etc. One mentor decided to keep a notebook on activities her youth expressed interest in, realizing that activities she might choose, such as going to museums, might not always be enjoyable for the youth:

> I decided that [going to the museum] was too ambitions a thing, that I was looking for her to get something out of it rather than just letting it happen. And then smaller things are much more successful in our relationship. So at the very beginning, I used my notebook and I wrote down things that she was interested in doing. And one was in learning to use a sewing machine, which I have. And the other thing was she wanted to do some cooking.

Similarly, when asked if she had taken her youth to museums or concerts, another mentor responded: "Are you kidding? If I tried to take [my youth] to a museum, they would beat me...(laughter) [One] would say, man, that's stupid. And [the other] probably wouldn't go."

These adults tried to set goals for the relationship, but purposefully derived these goals from their assessments of what could be accomplished and what the youth wanted to accomplish--what one mentor described as "the smaller things." In focusing first on activities that the youth clearly expressed interest in, the mentors defined their roles as helping the youth realize their own desires. And by defining their roles in this way, the adults allowed the youth to mold the relationship, with the mentors adjusting their own expectations accordingly.

And their youth appreciated it. Although one youth did in fact enjoy her trip to a museum, she appeared to attach greater importance to baking a cake:

> It was...chocolate...And then around it had a lot of whipped cream in the middle and it had fudge with strawberries. I got a magazine long ago, like three years ago, and I've been watching that cake, you know. And I've

> been thinking, when should I [make] it, but at my house they don't have...those things, so I never did. So then I told [my mentor] and [she said] we could do it.

This activity carries even greater significance when placed in the context of the youth's life. This adolescent reported experiencing great disorder and instability in her home life. At the time of the second interview, she and her family had just been relocated from a hotel for the homeless to a modest two-bedroom home. The fact that she was able to do something that she had been thinking about for three years was important to her, making her obviously invested in the activities that she performed with her mentor.

As this case illustrates, when the youth finally felt comfortable requesting an activity--often an activity that the adult might assume the youth had done before or would view as being pointless--their mentors honored their requests. Two brothers matched with two elders, a father and son, were hesitant, even afraid at first to suggest activities:

> Interviewer: Was there ever a time that you really wanted to do something and you felt like you were afraid to ask them?
> Youth: Yeah.
> Interviewer: Yeah, what did you want to ask?
> Youth: My brother asked me to ask them, that's what.
> Interviewer: What happened, tell me about this.
> Youth: He wanted to go to the miniature golf, and then I did tell them and so then we went.
> Interviewer: Then you went?
> Youth: Yeah, we told them...and then after that we went.

The activities that the youth expressed interest in were not always recreational. For example, at least three elders tried to design activities around their youth's career interests. In one case, when a black female youth expressed an interest in becoming a lawyer, her mentor contacted a young black female lawyer to meet with the youth. In addition, five Springfield youth expressed an interest in finding employment, and their mentors helped them by driving them around town to interviews, and introducing them to potential employers. One mentor described this process as follows:

> I'm trying to think of things that we can do so if he doesn't have any original ideas, I'll have some. At the same time, I'm open to whatever he wants to do. I told him that I have a car and I'm available for taxi rides from here to there if he wants to fill out an application or does have an appointment or whatever. And otherwise, you know, we'll just go by ear, which is what we're going to do. I don't want to be structured where, you know, I want him to enjoy it, you know, it's just a get-together. And if he wants to just sit and have coffee for two hours and talk, what am I going to say?

### Choosing Activities Ineffectively

Elders in dissatisfied relationships were more likely to conclude that the adolescents did not have preferences, or that their preferences did not deserve regard. When elders did not follow their youth's preferences, they found the youth to be uncooperative. Significantly, they found themselves in a degenerative process: first, the youth missed appointments occasionally, then became "too busy," then failed to show up at all. In three instances, the youth asked to leave the program. One youth, when asked about what he and his mentor did together, said the following:

> Youth: He just told me the stuff that we were going to do.
> Interviewer: Did you feel like you had enough say or you didn't have enough say about what you were going to do?
> Youth: Didn't have no say.
> Interviewer: Did you tell him the kind of things that you wanted to do like you just told me?
> Youth: I told him.
> Interviewer: But what?
> Youth: But like we didn't do those kind of stuff.
> Interviewer: Why do you think you didn't do any of those kind of things?
> Youth: Like maybe he didn't want to do that kind of stuff. I guess that's about it.

When the interviewer and the youth discussed the reasons the youth felt he could not talk to his mentor, or why he thought his mentor did not listen, the youth noted, "Like he could have talked more and saying stuff, you know, like 'what do you want to do' instead of doing the same thing over and over." And as the youth told his interviewer, there was in fact much he would have liked to do with his mentor, and there was even specific help he would have liked to receive:

> Interviewer: How would you have liked it to have been different? What else would you have liked?
> Youth: Help me out.
> Interviewer: In what area, in what kind of way?
> Youth: Like help me getting my license or something and getting a job, help me out in school, with my homework and all that.
> Interviewer: What would you have liked to have done, if you could call the shots, what would you have done?
> Youth: Like went to different kind of places.
> Interviewer: Like what?
> Youth: Instead of like the same places.
> Interviewer: Did you ever tell him that that's what you wanted to do?
> Youth: I told him, he never listened.

After five months of increasingly sporadic meetings, the youth quit the program, commenting that quitting was "like the best thing...I think it was a waste of my time. I could have been doing something more fun."

Similarly, at the time of the second interview, another youth had begun dropping out of his relationship with his mentor. In the prior summer and fall, the youth reported that his mentor was very helpful." All last year, during the summer, past the fall, he helped me...Yeah, he did, he took me everywhere looking for a job...I mean I must have filled out 20 applications."

But recently, after a series of lost jobs, the mentor decided to stop giving the youth this type of help because he felt the youth had not learned from it, and was still making the same mistakes, quitting jobs and being generally irresponsible--"trying to get something for nothing," as he said: "I tell him, you know you can't go through life like this waiting for things to happen." The youth interpreted this as "nagging," and reported that he particularly resented the mentor's no longer taking him to interviews or doing activities that he chose:

> Youth: I tried to take him fishing a couple of times. And we haven't gone fishing since; I take it he didn't like it. But I love fishing and I love hiking, all that stuff.
> Interviewer: So you'd like to do more of those things with him. Are there any things that you do now with him that you'd like to do less often?
> Youth: Sit around my house and talk. You know, I like to go out, I'd rather go somewhere. He never brought me over [to] his house, I don't know why. I'd like to go over [to] his house and talk.

One youth also indicated that he wanted a say in when and for how long he would meet with his mentor, and resented not being asked to be part of the process of making these arrangements. He recounted one of a number of similar incidents with his mentor:

> I don't even know if he called to say he was coming, you know, he just popped in sometimes...He came down there when I was working, he just stopped in...I only talked to him for like two minutes, I told him I had to go...[my boss] was always on my case...I didn't really care if [my mentor] was pissed, I was really pissed off myself--my [boss] was all over my case. The minute I stopped, [my boss would] get on my ass...Shortly after that I told [my mentor] I didn't want to be in the program anymore.

Another mentor wanted to focus on educational activities, despite the youth's expressed preferences for other activities, such as swimming and fishing. This mentor found his youth an additional tutor and set up a reward system, whereby the youth could participate in activities he requested only when his grades improved. Like seven others, this mentor did not explore alternative ways of relating to his youth or alternative possibilities for shared activities. Instead, this mentor felt that the activities suggested by his youth, such as swimming in his pool, were attempts to take advantage of him:

> The problem [was]...[he] was always working me in the sense of, what am I going to get next? I tried to explain that this was not the thing on this program, what you're going to get next.

It is interesting to note that for this youth, the time with his mentor he most appreciated was the least structured: "we were playing, and he was chasing me...I was in the water and he was squirting water at me...It was a hot day and he was putting cold water to cool down the pool. So he was kind of squirting it at me." The youth reported that he wished he could have done less work and had more fun with his mentor. He wanted to "[play] around more, but he's not an active person. He's a teacher...teachers are like that."

A mentor who wanted to improve her youth's grades and speech described the youth as "a quiet, always polite little boy," but reported that he was not compliant in participating in the activities she chose--she found that he was consistently forgetting his books, denying that he had homework, and refusing to discuss school at all. The mentor said:

> He isn't doing too well in school. I've wanted to help him; I would plead with him. And he'd tell me, oh, it's good; it's easy. And still the reports would come in about his work.

Like the previous mentor, she did not recognize the youth's requests for activities. For example, the following is her account of a time when the youth telephoned her to ask to go to a carnival in his neighborhood:

> There was one Sunday...when I came back from church, I was home a few minutes and the phone rang. And Derrick[5] said, where were you, I've been calling you. I said I went to church. I said how are you, I tried to get in touch with you...I said, well what are you doing? [He said] I think I'm going to a carnival down the street from my house. So I said, oh you are, is your brother going with you? [He said] no. [I asked] who are you going with? [He said] I don't know...So finally he said, you want to go? [I thought] to a carnival, in that neighborhood where it's supposed to be infested with gangs--me?...I really felt badly about it, but I was not going to expose myself to a carnival out there...but it was so funny how...he really never came out and said will you take me.

---

[5] All names included in excerpts from interviews have been changed to protect participants' identities.

This youth indicated during his interview that his mentor "helped him with his words" all the time, but offered little insight into his satisfaction with the relationship. However, the mentor's comments show that the youth demonstrated his dissatisfaction. For example, his mentor reported that on one occasion, on first getting into the car with his mentor, he asked, "How long is this going to last?" Eventually, the youth "voted with his feet," i.e., withdrew from the relationship by missing meetings. His family seemed to support this decision; for example, when the mentor would schedule appointments, the child would be out with his family.

### Recognizing the Importance of Fun

The activities that proved to be the most memorable to the youth and that they appeared to value most were those they described as being "fun"--activities that took the youth to new places and/or that the youth showed an interest in doing. The majority of the youth felt that they did not have many "fun" things to do at home, and viewed the program as an outlet for getting out of the house and having a good time. The activities, then, fulfilled a need that the youth wanted met.

Doing what the youth wanted also carried an affective importance to the youth, influencing their perceptions of the elders, their satisfaction with the relationship, and their continued involvement in the program. First, the activities that the pairs engaged in were used by the youth to assess the elders. The youth's responses to interview questions indicate that they viewed the adults' willingness to take them places as a criterion for whether they described the elders as being "boring" or "fun." For example, two youth who described their mentors as being fun made the following statements:

> He takes me to places that I've never been.
>
> She's straight...we go out [to] a lot of different places...go out to eat [at] a lot of different places. And she's fun, you know, she's a lot of fun.

Conversely, youth who described their mentors as being boring stated that they did not get to go places--something they had expected to do coming into the program. One youth who described his mentor as boring, expressed his expectations for the program:

> Interviewer: What did you think that person would be like, what did you think you'd be doing with that person?
> Youth: Fun stuff.
> Interviewer: Like what?
> Youth: Just going places.
> Interviewer: Where would you like to go?
> Youth: Movies, stuff like that.
> Interviewer: And you don't do that stuff now?
> Youth: No.

For another youth, liking her mentor was not enough to keep her involved in the program. Although the youth enjoyed her mentor's company, describing her as being nice, the youth stated that she really preferred getting out and doing things. When she realized that she and her mentor were spending most of their time together in the mentor's home, the youth asked to leave the program. Her dissatisfaction was evident in the interview:

> Interviewer: Thinking about the things that you did, can you remember a time that you didn't like, when things just didn't seem to work out?
> Youth: Just sitting around at the house...
> Interviewer: Why didn't that work as well?
> Youth: Because I don't like to sit around the house.
> Interviewer: What kinds of things would you rather do?
> Youth: Go out shopping, movies or something. Or just go to the mall and walk around.
> Interviewer: So you didn't like it, sitting around because it was
> Youth: Boring. (#137, p. 8)

All the youth who did go places with their mentors appreciated the fact that the elders gave them that kind of attention. For example, one youth described his appreciation that his mentor took him for a walk in the zoo:

> I think it was that somebody would make the effort you know, just to come out and do that kind of thing for me.

Thus, youth appear to derive from adults' willingness to consider and participate in having a good time not only a sense of support, but a sense of the adult's reliability and commitment to the relationship.

Doing these activities and having fun together also appears to affect some of the youth's perspectives of older people. The youth came to view the elders as people who shared their interests--as people who were also interested in having a good time. The idea of being able to have fun with an elder helped the youth view the adults as people who had interests similar to their own:

> They're not what I thought they would be. I thought they would be very boring. [I thought] most of them would like old things...old clothes and stuff. And she's like a young teenager...She likes...the clothes we wear now, the styles, some of it. And she knows a lot.

Conversely, elders who did not take youth places were described as being "old," possibly because they seemed to fit the youth's preconceptions of older adults:

> Interviewer: Do you feel like you have anything in common with him?
> Youth: He's kind of...
> Interviewer: Kind of what?
> Youth: Old.
>
> Interviewer: Have you learned anything about older people from this program?
> Youth: I knew about older people before...they're all the same...they're all grouchy...[My mentor] had a temper. I knew how to piss him off. Just by talking to him, say the right thing--boom, it set him off like a bomb... I used to tease him or hassle him sometimes...talk about sex and stuff, you know.

### Allowing the Youth to Take the Lead

Following the direction of a youth's interests does not appear to be easy. According to the elders interviewed, at least half the youth (13) were extremely slow in revealing their preferences. In addition, some elders entered the program with their own views of what their roles should be and what they wanted to accomplish in the relationship. But what appears to distinguish satisfied from dissatisfied relationships is the mentor's ability to understand the importance of allowing the relationship to be youth-driven, and to modify his or her own role according to the needs of the youth. One mentor said in hindsight that he wished he had learned this lesson sooner:

> Adult: Well, I don't know if I'd do anything differently except to try to impose upon myself the things that I found have more success in developing the relationship.
> Interviewer: Like what?
> Adult: Well, finding the desires of a youngster: what does he like to do, where is he going, where does he want to go?

Practitioners currently debate whether mentoring relationships should be task-oriented, in which case the adult teaches the youth a skill, or open-ended, in which case the pair is left to determine the focus of the relationship. The activities described by the youth as being fun appear to diffuse this debate--they seem to enjoy not only recreational activities, such as playing miniature golf, but task-oriented activities as well, such as learning to cook, going job-hunting, etc. Further, since both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs took part in both types of activities, the specific activity does not appear to predict a relationship's development. What does appear to be critical to a relationship's development, however, is that the activities chosen are those that youth are invested in and show interest in.

### The Mentor's Attitude Toward Disclosure

According to the accounts of the adults and youth interviewed, success in initiating discussions with the youth about their personal or familial life was quite rare for mentors, particularly early in the relationship. What appeared to aid the development of more lasting and trusting relationships was not how much the youth confided, but how the adults treated the youth's reluctance to do so. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely not to force disclosure--they believed that delving into the youth's private lives could be beyond the scope of their involvement, and instead waited for the youth to decide whether one of their roles would be that of confidante:

> Unless [the youth I am matched with] on their own directly ask for my counsel in a given situation or area, I don't think I'd make the effort to try to look in on their private lives.
>
> I don't believe in speeding it. Go along slow, you do better and learn more. I may talk to them, you know, about their family life this week and [wait until] maybe two or three weeks later before I say anything about their family again. Sometimes people resent you asking too frequently about their family. So I just don't form a habit of doing that. I'll go slow and if they just don't open up about nothing about none of their family, well I'll feel like at a certain point, I'm supposed to ask a little bit about it. And then whatever they say, don't crowd the issue.

The youth appeared to place a high premium on having these particular boundaries respected. Although they did discuss school and family problems with the elders, most did not want to disclose problems they defined as "personal." In fact, the majority of the youth reported that they were likely to keep these problems to themselves, not disclosing them to anyone:

> I basically keep to myself...I usually...don't talk...to anybody about...how I feel or anything, except if they ask once in a while, but I mean I'm the type [of] person to keep myself to myself, what I'm thinking to myself. But I still talk to her...sometimes I tell her a few personal things, you know, if it comes up. But it's not like I...keep something from her, because whatever I keep from her it be stuff that I keep from everybody else.

One youth's parents were involved in a custody battle, and while the youth discussed her feelings about the court case, she appreciated that her mentor did not question her about the case or discuss it with her family:

> Interviewer: Has [your mentor] tried to help you at all with that problem?
> Youth: No, she really doesn't butt in. Which I like and appreciate that very much.

A common mistake made in attempting to establish close, trusting relationships--a mistake made by seven mentors in dissatisfied relationships and three mentors in satisfied relationships--was to begin the relationship with the activity youth find most emotionally

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challenging, namely, by probing the youth for disclosures of information that youth are often ashamed of or criticized for: poor school performance, criminal records, or dysfunctional or abusive family behaviors.

Mentors might have pushed youth to reveal this kind of information because they were anxious to meet the youth's most pressing needs. Many also appear to believe that "having a good talk" is a valuable process for guiding youth into adulthood. The youth involved, however, indicated that they viewed their mentors' efforts to force disclosure quite negatively, particularly at the beginning of the relationship, and without regard to how gently the mentor probed. One youth said the following:

> Well, he was saying, you know, I was trying to forget about what happened in the past and he was like trying to bring it back. And I was like getting mad.

This youth tried unsuccessfully to communicate his dissatisfaction with these conversations by ignoring them: "I wasn't really listening or I was thinking about something else and he used to know." According to the youth, the elder became angered by this strategy and chose to persist in questioning the youth. Reflecting on his abandoned relationship with the mentor, the youth offered the following advice to the mentor in developing subsequent relationships: "Don't come on that strong. Take it slow, day by day."

Another mentor repeatedly took his youth out to eat as a means of encouraging discussion about the youth's problems. The elder reported that he intentionally avoided activities because he was concerned they would distract the youth from serious conversation. From the youth's responses, however, it appears that he not only failed to understand that this activity was a strategy for promoting conversation, but grew frustrated by what he perceived as a boring activity. When the interviewer asked the youth if there were things "you all used to do that you really didn't want to do," he responded that he grew tired of eating: "just go out and eat, eat, eat. I didn't mind it when I was at work in lunch breaks, that was all right, but..." When the youth quit the job where the elder regularly treated him to lunch, he understood even less why shared meals remained their sole activity.

As these examples illustrate, youth do not always understand the purpose or the practice of "sitting down for a good talk" with an adult. Indeed, many of the young people interviewed for this study appeared unfamiliar with this mode of adult/youth exchange as the mentors understood it, and were thus unable to produce the expected responses. One youth, for example, would look down at her feet and say, "Yes, ma'am," or "No, ma'am," when her mentor wanted to discuss school.

Mentors experienced difficulty when they measured the relationship's success by the extent of the youth's disclosure, assuming that personal divulgences constituted a requisite first step in relationship formation. When the youth resisted, some mentors pushed

The elder who took his youth out to eat, for example, thought it was very important for his youth to speak openly with him. Disclosure conveyed to him that the relationship had crystallized. However, because he considered no alternative strategies, the relationship did not appear to develop. The youth, apparently, had thought of other ways the two could move toward closeness, noting that doing something he liked to do actually would have prompted him to talk more with his mentor. As he told the interviewer:

> Youth: Sometimes I wish I had somebody younger, more active, someone that would...[get] on my dirt bike and go for a ride.
> Interviewer: Do you think you would have talked to somebody like that more or less than you talked with [your mentor]?
> Youth: Probably would have talked to them more, probably could have gone out riding all day long...Yeah, if we went out riding all day, we'd have a good time and be talking.

## Methods of Offering Support and Advice

How the mentor offered support and advice to the youth also differentiated satisfied from dissatisfied pairs. Adults in satisfied relationships were more likely than those in dissatisfied relationships to demonstrate their support, to respond to requests for help in a neutral and nonjudgmental manner, and to offer practical suggestions for solving problems.

### Demonstrating Support

All 17 adults in satisfied pairs but only half of the adults in dissatisfied pairs discovered that another key to breaking the youth's silence was demonstrating support. These mentors consistently offered reassurance and kindness, both verbally and through their actions, and they made a conscious effort to reinforce that they were there for the youth from the very beginning of the relationship. One mentor started this process during her first meeting with her youth:

> I'll tell you what really broke the ice...it happened at her house, and the first thing...she said would I like to see her room, that her mother made her clean it up. And I said well, if you really want me to see your room, I'd be glad to look at it, but I'm not here for that. I'm here to be a friend for you. So she was a little, you know--what adult doesn't want to see a clean room. Well, I went up to see it since I knew she had spent time, and I complimented her. But I explained that wasn't my interest and I wasn't going to be involved with things like that. I wasn't taking the place of her mother or a teacher or anybody like that. I was just going to be a special friend. So that broke the ice a little bit.

Throughout their relationships, these mentors reminded the youth that they were available to talk at any time, and that they wanted to be with the youth. They offered words of encouragement, telling the youth that they cared about them, liked them, and believed in them. Further, the youth did not have to do anything to get this attention from their mentors. They did not have to disclose their feelings or problems, they did not have to make progress in school, and they did not even have to talk very much.

For example, one mentor decided that rather than force the relationship on his youth, the mentor would consistently reassure the youth that he was there and that he cared:

> I don't want to push too much so that he feels, you know, that I'm always on him. But I just want to spend enough time that...he knows that somebody cares.

This mentor demonstrated his care and support by visiting and writing letters to his youth when the youth was sent to a drug treatment program. Although the program was a two-hour drive from home, the mentor arranged to meet with the youth and to take him out on day passes. According to the youth, his mentor visited him more often than his parents. The youth appreciated this reassurance and spoke of it during the interview:

> Youth: He always said that...[he] believed in me, that I could do it...Just like when he'd leave, you know, after a pass, he'd drop me off back at the [drug treatment program], and he'd say, Adam, I believe in you, good luck, I know you can do it.
> Interviewer: And how did that make you feel?
> Youth: It felt good to know that somebody, you know, believed in me.

Other youth spoke of their elders' praises and affection, viewing their actions as signs of support and encouragement:

> Interviewer: Was there ever a time when she said something to encourage you, something that made you feel more confident, made you feel good about yourself?
> Youth: She just tells me you're a very young, beautiful woman all the time, she always gives me a lot of compliments. She says you have a very nice complexion, pretty eyes.
> Interviewer: What do you think about that?
> Youth: Definitely I like it. I mean who doesn't want to hear your hair looks very nice and healthy.
>
> She lets me know she loves me.
>
> I learned...that I was a smart person and all...I never really thought that I was smart, [that] I could really do it if I really tried.

The youth also appreciated the fact that the adults were available to talk:

> He's just there for me, you know, if I want to talk or something, he's always there.

### Responding to Requests for Help

As the youth came to realize that the elders could be a source of support, they began to request their help. Obviously, the elders' responses to these requests were important. For example, one youth placed great significance in the fact that her mentor would help her when she was sick:

> I would call [my mentor] on the phone...like when I'm sick and I told her I was feeling sick, can you come over, and she would come, like as soon as I call her if she's home.

Youth in the Memphis program appreciated their mentors' talking to them about their pregnancies, making them laugh when they were not feeling well, and calling them at home when they were absent from school.

Once an adult became aware of any of the youth's problems, through either the youth's disclosure or the adult's own observation, the adult's handling of the problem was crucial to the relationship's development. The adult could either judge and criticize the youth, or offer possible solutions to the problem without passing judgment. Mentors in pairs that expressed satisfaction with the match typically did the latter, avoiding reprimands and judgments but offering instruction the youth defined as useful.

These adults continued to practice active listening when the youth spoke, and approached giving advice cautiously, offering it only occasionally. When advice was given, it was often applied in the context of reassurance. Furthermore, these mentors did not appear to expect their advice to result in drastic changes in the youth's behavior.

The youth appreciated the elders' willingness to listen and offer help in solving a problem. While a number of youth did not feel that they actually accessed this support, knowing that the support was available was equally important to them. Many youth spoke of the elders' ability to listen:

> She listens. She don't try to change the subject or act like she's not thinking of what you're trying to tell her. She tries to help solve the problem.
>
> Interviewer: How can you tell [your mentors listen]?
> Youth: Because they answer every question I tell them.

One youth contrasted her mentor's listening style with that of other adults, who in her opinion tend not to listen but speak of their own experience instead:

> If I had a problem, you know, like your parents will go, oh, when I was young, I walked 30 miles to school and...

These youth expressed that if they wanted to talk to the elders, they felt comfortable doing so--they trusted that the elders would listen and they trusted the advice they gave:

> I feel comfortable around him, I can talk to him...I feel relaxed. And he has a lot...to say, you know. When he says something to me, I can believe him. And I take it to the heart because he's honest and he doesn't lie to me. He never has and he never, I don't think he ever will.

### Suggesting Ways to Solve Problems

When mentors did give advice or instruction, they considered how the youth would respond, given the developing state of their relationship. In the beginning of their relationships, most adults were faced with youth missing appointments and not returning telephone calls. How they responded to this testing behavior was also instrumental in the relationship's development. For example, when one mentor's youth missed four appointments to meet with him, the mentor decided not to lecture him, fearing that would alienate the youth and defeat the purpose of the relationship. Instead, the elder was persistent with the youth, explaining how much he enjoyed their meetings and expressing his desire to continue doing so. A few adults also explained that their time was important, and that if the youth were not interested in spending time with them, they would leave the program:

> I said, you know, that I'm all done coming all the way [over here] and your not being here--you either call me the night before or early in the morning before I leave. If something comes up and he's not going to be there, I said, you know, it's just unacceptable that I leave home and travel 21 miles to your house and try and get there on time like I'm supposed to and you couldn't care less, you're not there.

These statements were coupled with practical suggestions for helping the youth remember appointments. These mentors who experienced missed appointments bought the youth alarm clocks and calendars, reminding the youth that the meetings were important to them--that they wanted to spend time with the youth. Another mentor offered a creative solution to her youth's inability to sleep at night, which was affecting her school attendance and ability to concentrate:

> In school, I was getting bad grades and I had this problem because we used to live in this small house, only one bedroom, no doors to the bedroom or

> anything. So there was roaches and stuff like that. My brother had his music like at 12 at night. My mom was watching TV and I couldn't go to sleep. So I told [my mentor]...[and] she told me to buy some earplugs, and we went to buy them.

When one youth was experiencing problems in school with a particular teacher, causing her to skip class and act out in class, the mentor recommended that the youth speak with a guidance counselor and try to change classes. When other youth were experiencing difficulty in getting to school on time, the mentors intervened by giving the youth wake-up calls on school mornings; in Memphis, foster grandmothers called during the school day when a teen mother was absent.

Another youth told the interviewer that unlike her grandmother, who the youth felt dictated advice, her mentor offered advice with an explanation:

> Youth: Well, my grandmother tells me...don't have a baby before you finish [high school] and [my mentor] says...get your education and a diploma because that's the only way you can get a job now, with a diploma, and first get married and then have a child.
> Interviewer: Does it feel different when [your mentor] gives you advice than when your grandmother does?
> Youth: Sort of. A better lecture.

As the youth came to trust the adults, 15 youth (12 in satisfied relationships and three in dissatisfied relationships) discussed with their mentors problems they were experiencing with family, boyfriends or girlfriends, or school. Of these youth, 11 in satisfied relationships appreciated the help their mentors offered, compared with only one youth in a dissatisfied relationship. Eight of the youth in satisfied relationships particularly appreciated their mentors' assisting in negotiating relationships with family members; they reported being able to implement strategies that the mentor had suggested for getting through arguments. One such strategy was to encourage the youth to remove themselves from the situation:

> Youth: She tell me just ignore it, like when I'm fighting...She said call me or do something, get out of the house and walk around--she's nice.
> Interviewer: Does that advice makes sense to you?
> Youth: Yeah...because I...end up breaking windows and stuff.
> Interviewer: When you get real mad.
> Youth: Yeah. I get mad and they call the police.

> I don't know, like I'd just get pissed off. I'd come home and my mom would start yelling and screaming at me, and I'd [freak] out and start hitting and stuff...but I'd call him and he'd come over and we'd go out and he'd calm me down and that would be it, you know.

Another mentor helped her youth to learn the importance of listening, then explaining her side of an argument:

> Like she told me...if [my mother's] telling me something, don't walk away... stay there and listen and say "yes, mom"...And then...[say] "can you listen to my part too?" Because then if I just walk in my room, she's never going to hear my part and then she's going to get mad and I'm going to be mad and it's never going to get solved. It's been working good...now I talk with my mom about guys and stuff like that.

These youth viewed the mentors as being particularly useful because they were outsiders. For example, one youth stated the following:

> Well I mean, my dad's not very...emotional, so like when you talk to him, it's like just talking to someone, it's like talking to the tape recorder, you know. So [my mentor], I mean, at least you get something out of him...you get some insight. Plus it's someone, you're not listening to your parents ...because I mean you listen to your parents, yeah, all right, you know, you're full of it. But you hear it from [my mentor]...and he's not blood-related...and he's someone new...I mean you don't live with him so...when you talk to him it's not like, okay, okay.

### Ineffective Responses: Criticism and Preaching

Eight of the nine youth in dissatisfied relationships cited their mentors' criticism of them as one of the reasons they found their relationships disappointing. These youth were very clear, as evidenced by their behaviors, that they would not tolerate such criticism, even if it was clear that the mentor used criticism in attempts to advise or instruct. One youth, for example, cited his mentor's use of criticism as one reason he could tell the relationship "just wasn't working out. He would, you know, criticize me a lot...About how I got, you know, in all these problems." When another youth's mentor criticized her dress, she ignored her mentor for the entire day:

> Youth: This skirt, this skirt, right, I wore this skirt to school one day and she said that skirt's too short, you don't need to be wearing no skirts like that. This one day I was mad at her for a whole day.
> Interviewer: Right, so you didn't like that.
> Youth: No.
> Interviewer: Did you tell her about it or did you just stay mad?
> Youth: No, I didn't tell her about it, she knew I was mad.

The use of criticism was not necessarily a function of the mentor being socially or culturally distant from the youth. Mentors who lived in the same neighborhoods as their youth or were of the same socioeconomic and cultural background were as likely as others to criticize their youth. For example, one adult who lived in the same neighborhood as her youth explained that she simply extended the role she played in the community to her youth:

> You know...I'm just a neighborhood mentor to everybody's children...I'll say it like that...I'm a mentor for the whole neighborhood...Any kid that I see doing wrong, you know, I try to correct. If I can help whatever situation it might be. Because a lot of times when children get away from their homes they get into a little mischief, you know, and some people don't say anything. But I don't mind because when I see kids doing wrong I say something...like I see the children going to school dirty and I says you go back home and tell your mother you're too dirty to go to school.

When she corrected her youth, problems arose:

> Oftentimes, [my youth] would come and I didn't like how she was dressed and I would tell her about it. And she would go and she wouldn't come back for a few days and I wouldn't know why.

This mentor reported that she also tried to dissuade her youth from taking dance classes, stating that she should not be dancing while her grades were suffering:

> We got into it quite a few times about that. Because I don't think you should stay in a dancing class for two hours when you're failing in other grades. What's the use of knowing how to dance if you can't read?

The youth continued in the relationship because she became friends with her mentor's granddaughter, but the relationship dissolved when the youth and the mentor's granddaughter engaged in a fist fight. This prompted the program coordinator to intervene and reassign the youth to another mentor. The youth said of her new mentor:

> All the time, all the time she asks me about dance class and it's very important to me...I was telling her that there was a dance that my dance teacher choreographed, and I was telling her that everyone would dance, would fit into the talent show. And so she said, "If you want to do the dance, do the dance, and do the best you can." She gives me advice, but she doesn't force me to take it.

Mentors in dissatisfied relationships were also more likely than those in satisfied relationships to "preach" to youth, particularly when the mentors felt they were dealing with controversial subjects or decisions that might jeopardize their youth's futures. For Memphis foster grandmothers working with teen mothers, this was a particularly difficult challenge. One foster grandmother reported that she gave her youth the following advice:

> I said maybe it's not a good idea to have too many friends, because your friends will con you. And you need to get you one friend...don't try to have a whole lot of friends. And I would tell her, it's not a good idea...because I said you're not a boy. I said...young boys, they go out and do this and do that and do this...but ladies is different. I said your name will follow you everywhere you go.

Another foster grandmother said the following:

> And I talked to her one day about the pregnancy, and I asked her didn't she know it was wrong. She said no...I didn't know it at the time, but I do now. I said, well, are you going to play that same--she said no, no, no, I will never do that again...And I'm trying to drone that and put that into these girls today. I remember, God, when I was 14 and 15 and 16 years old, I didn't know what a boy had down in front of him--I didn't.

The youth in these relationships were more likely to ignore their mentors when they felt their mentors were preaching or moralizing. One Memphis youth, for example, reported that she much preferred another girl's mentor because this foster grandmother talked to her about clothes, boyfriends and other things that interested her--all subjects she felt she could not easily discuss with her mentor:

> [My foster grandmother] has been out of touch with somebody my age. But Mrs. Thomas, she talks to teenagers daily because...her grandson and her granddaughters...[are] about our age and...she knew how to talk to us.

### The Adult's Attitudes Toward Economic, Social and Cultural Differences

Half the mentors interviewed for this study reported living middle-class lifestyles (i.e., they owned homes in middle-class neighborhoods and/or were retired professionals with college educations) that were geographically, economically and, at times, culturally distant from their youth. One youth, for example, had experienced periods of homelessness. According to her mentor, when the youth first visited the mentor's residence, the youth failed to recognize it as a home:

> We went to the house and I opened the door and she came in and she stood in the middle of the room and she said what is this. And I said, I don't know what you mean, and she says what is this. And she started roaming, I mean from room to room to room. It was really strange. I said this is my home, and she said, I don't understand. She literally didn't understand. So we talked about that a little bit, [about] how long I had lived

> here and that many of the things had belonged to my parents and my grandparents--and that was a concept that was...strange to her. How could I have things that were so old and they still looked so good.

How the adults handled these economic and cultural differences was critical to the development of the relationships. In fact, the adults' expectations, based on their understanding of the youth's situation and environment, appeared to provide a context for their styles of interaction with the youth. Although all mentors' initial expectations may have been similar--that they would work one-on-one with a youth identified as needing adult attention--their ability to adjust those expectations to fit the realities they encountered differed greatly, and largely determined the participants' satisfaction with their match. In some cases, this involved waiting for the youth to overcome a heightened shyness; in others, it involved abandoning assumptions and accepting the youth as he or she was. In all cases, it required that the adult refrain from making harsh judgments.

The mentors' expectations and assumptions appeared to be linked to their ability to relate on some level to the youth's situation. Eleven mentors from satisfied pairs and two mentors from dissatisfied pairs said they attempted to relate the experiences their youth were going through to some event or feeling in their own lives. For example, one mentor could identify with the fact that his youth was in trouble with the law:

> We did...so many things that these kids are doing. I mean we didn't get caught, you know, and that's part of it. I can relate to it because I had a younger brother who...seemed to have a genius for being on the other side of the law. And so I recognize where these kids are at. I think the older they get, if it's not turned around in some way, I think they become hardened to that kind of a role.

This mentor was able to identify both himself and his brother with the youth, understanding the circumstances of the youth's life. Similarly, another mentor's acceptance of her youth was grounded in perceived similarities:

> I think that she wants to learn, which at her age I certainly did, except [I had] advantages when I was young [like]...having all the books I wanted and...extracurricular activities...She hasn't got that, but I feel if she had those advantages, we would be very much alike...
>
> [And with the death of my daughter], that trauma that I've been through, we can identify with each other. With [my youth's] separation from her mother and worry about her mother...and the daughter of my daughter who died, she's now 10. She was eight when her mother died, and her father married again and...I haven't seen her for two years. And that's another way I understand [my youth], because I've always had the ability of repressing or blocking out a sorrow like that and I know that's what she's doing.

The majority of the other mentors in satisfied relationships felt they were able to understand their youth's feelings because they had raised children and, in some cases, grandchildren of their own. The adults' ability to empathize signaled a willingness to try to understand the youth's situation.

In trying to understand the youth, 12 elders in satisfied relationships were careful not to judge the youth's family, but instead tried to understand the family's circumstances. One mentor said:

> I just know [my youth's family] because of my relationship with [my youth]...I've been in the house. And the mother has at different times asked me if I'd pick up a gallon of milk for her and I do. They are dirt poor, dirt poor. People often criticize welfare and I don't know how anyone could be, you know, comfortable on welfare. I know I couldn't, but people seem to think that others on welfare have a good time.

Conversely, mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely than mentors in satisfied relationships to become critical of the youth's failure to "measure up to" youth they were accustomed to interacting with, such as their own children or other youth they had worked with. These mentors expressed frustration not only because they felt their youth were not as responsive or appreciative as other youth, but also because these youth had problems the mentors had not previously encountered. For example, a mentor who tutored his youth complained that his youth was reading below grade level. He expressed particular frustration when the youth did not respond as did other youth he had tutored:

> No, [he] is not one to learn and that's something that I'm not used to. [It is] very hard to get used to somebody who can't read a book or discuss a book, even on a fourth-grade level. I remember buying him one I liked, The Phantom Toll Booth. About a fourth-grade book. [He] was in the seventh grade. He couldn't read it. He couldn't make it out. He read part of it.

Further, this mentor had difficulty understanding the attention span of a 12-year-old:

> His attention span was about three minutes. That's the nut of the problem...I would take him to the library and ask him to write me a letter...Tell me what you did in the last few days and write me a letter and I'll correct it and I'll write a letter to you and you'll see how a letter is written. Well, he'd write about four lines and say, that's it. I'm not doing anymore, or that's my letter. [And I would say] that's not it...because I really don't know what you're doing with four lines. I can't correct it. Impossible... and he would just sit there and not do it...What am I supposed to do, hit him on the back of the neck?

Mentors in dissatisfied pairs were also more likely to be unable to accept their youth's situation. Instead of empathizing with the youth, these mentors were likely to attribute their difficulties working with the youth to familial or community failure; these explanations appear to have been based on the mentors' preconceptions of the youth's culture.

For example, the mentor who tutored his youth came to feel that his efforts to educate the youth provided poor competition for life on the streets. The mentor felt the youth found significant pleasure in that experience, as he told the interviewer:

> You have to understand where they come from, these kids. The first time I took him home, there had to be 20 policemen at the entrance to the project...Well, he thought it was very exciting because it was a murder. [He thought] we'd better get out and watch this thing. But it really wasn't that day. It was only a dope raid. Ah, [so then he thought] not exciting at all. This goes on and on with this kind of life. So the next time I took him home, there was two men who were absolutely killing each other with fists and about 50 people were watching this. He thought he'd best get out of the car. [He said]...Oh, yeah, I got to watch this. [So, I said] let's go home. But, oh, no, he wasn't going home...Oh, no way...When they see the police, they just follow the police and it's just something that you see on TV. What the police did, the next time, they put two big gates on the back end of that project where he lives. But when they started to make the dope raid, the dopers took their big cars and went right through the gates with the cars, and the kids thought this was absolutely terrific...Well, this is what he lives with and now, when he lives with this, how do I compete with this? Teach him how to read and write?

The mentor's assessment--that the youth was distracted by what went on around him--did not lead the mentor to change his expectations of the youth or the nature of their activities together. Instead, when the youth's grades did not improve and the mentor felt that the youth demonstrated insufficient concentration during tutoring sessions, the mentor perceived the youth's level of educational competence as laziness and decided to give up the relationship, to "surrender." The elder initiated the end of his weekly commitment to the youth, but maintained that the youth's problems were the result of his environment. As the elder told the interviewer:

> You will make an appointment with this kid, but your time is not valuable and they don't understand that you work, because their parents don't work. They don't come from a culture--living in a housing project--where people have schedules...This is a common fault.
>
> The mother is as narcissistic as hell and does these crazy things spending money on this basis where she isn't working--well she works as a waitress in

> a cafeteria line, meaning [that] if she makes four or five dollars an hour, it's a lot and they waste that, so she prefers this.

A mentor who wanted to improve her youth's grades and speech attributed her youth's lack of interest in schoolwork to his family:

> I have a feeling that he's encouraged and more or less promoted to...excel in his sports activities. The father seems to be quite involved with training him and his brothers...So, [the father] probably has ambitions that his young sons may be the youngest ones out there...to make all these millions. However, I have talked to [my youth] and I've told him...if this is his aspiration to be a professional sports person...you're going to have to know something, be able to talk to people...you will have had to have a formal education.

She also felt that her youth lacked culture: "I see this--I don't want to say ignorance--I see this lacking in the family home. Yet there are some positive things in that there seems to be a good family relationship. But the biggest thing that I can see there right now is--would you say culture--the lack of any. I don't want to say intelligence." Her attempts to "improve" the youth's speech reflected a desire to provide the youth with a sense of culture. She felt that he would fail to achieve academic success because his diction reflected his socioeconomic and cultural background:

> He talks like his mother: monotone, yep, nope. When I call, I don't know whether it's he or she. This is where he's going to need help. But the poor kid...this is the way it goes when I call. Mrs. Paxton, this is Julia Jones, do you know who I am, how are you--all right. No return, no response.
>
> I have met four generations...he graduated from junior high school and I went [to the graduation]. [It was like] Tijuana, Mexico...the way everybody was dressed...I don't think I've ever been in a setting like that. It was sort of sad to me. You know how Mexicans dress...a lot of satin and gold jewels and kids, you know, they dress to kill. But they dress their little children--you should see some of their weddings. And it's cheap looking...One little boy, I'm sure he must have had on his father's tails, came down...And I blame the staff. They should have told those kids...it's better for them to have just had on some little things, but I guess they felt so good about themselves.

The ability to understand a youth's situation was not necessarily a function of the mentor's race or socioeconomic status. In fact, five of the 11 mentors of the same race and social class as their youth felt unable to identify with the experiences of their youth. However, as was more often the case, mentors of different races and socioeconomic statuses from their youth were likely to express feelings based on preconceptions through the course of the interview, whether in discussing a parent's "limited" English-speaking abilities or in describing a youth's home or academic ability. However, these elders' ability to keep these feelings to themselves, away from the youth, made the difference.

### The Adult's Ability to Adjust His/Her Expectations

The adults' abilities to adjust their expectations of the youth and keep their feelings about a youth's family and environment in check appeared to establish a context for their styles of interaction with the youth and, in turn, the youth's response to those approaches. For example, although all mentors expressed some disappointment with the progress of their relationships, mentors who were satisfied with their relationships were more likely to adjust their expectations. They understood that the gains were likely to be small and that the youth were unlikely to express appreciation and gratitude directly. One mentor recalled a recent shopping trip to the mall, an activity that she reported doing repeatedly with her youth:

> And this is the first time that, when she left, she said, I had a wonderful time. That took a whole damn year, but we made it.

Still, the rewards could be great. One mentor recalled a time when his youth told him that he loved him:

> We were talking. They were getting ready, they were cleaning up the house. It was right after supper, I guess...and at the end, he said, they're getting on my back to go, and he said, I love you.

Experiences like these were infrequent at best. Therefore, most adults took pleasure in just spending time with the youth. One mentor recalled the enjoyment he felt in watching a high school football game with his youth:

> See, Mike lives in Downingtown, I live in Coatesville. Over the years, Downingtown and Coatesville had a very strong rivalry. And the kids see it, you know, and they're aware of it. So when Mike and I went to the annual Downingtown/Coatesville Thanksgiving game, Coatesville was undefeated. And Downingtown had won four and lost four. Downingtown beat us 8 to 7. And he did not let me forget it. But it was good. I felt good about his being, you know, truly involved in the almost charisma of the [game]--and he was very vocal, which is not Mike's usual thing. And he said, I knew we'd win...But then Coatesville finished the season undefeated and they played Great Valley...[in] what they call here the high school Super Bowl, and Coatesville won. And Mike and I went, and I said too bad Downingtown couldn't have been here. But I really felt good both of those times. And I think that started a real enjoyable part of our relation-

> ship. For at least two and a half to three months now it's been, it's been a real joy, it's very enjoyable.

Mentors in satisfied relationships tried to have realistic expectations about changes that could occur in the youth, realizing that the youth showing up for meetings, expressing appreciation, or having a good time with them were all accomplishments. Mentors who expected that the gains of the relationship would be great--that they would establish a "mentoring" relationship where the youth outwardly esteemed and valued them and they would transform the youth--were typically very disappointed.

## III. NEGOTIATING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE YOUTH'S FAMILY

The adult/youth pairs do not exist in isolation; both the youth and the mentors come in contact with other individuals--primarily from the youth's social network--such as the program coordinator, caseworkers and teachers. Although the adult volunteers' relationships with all these people help shape the pairs' interactions, the relationship that appears to carry the most influence is the one the mentor establishes with the youth's family.

All 22 elders who reported contact with their youth's families discussed the difficulty of establishing this relationship. Although the mentors tried to inform the parents of the purpose of the program, emphasizing that they were not trying to replace the parents, they reported experiencing difficulty establishing boundaries of communication with the parents. For example, mentors reported that parents sometimes perceived them as a resource for counseling, or looked to them for information that the youth were reluctant to disclose. When one considers the incidents that occur rather routinely in these adolescents' experiences--sexual activity, poor school performance, drinking, potentially criminal behavior, etc.--it is easy to imagine how difficult and precarious the mentors' relationships with the families could become.

### DIFFERENCES IN STYLES OF INTERACTION

As in the mentor's styles of interaction with the youth, differences were found between satisfied and dissatisfied matches in the mentor's styles of interaction with the youth's family. These differences coalesced around one central theme: the depth of the mentor's involvement with the youth's family. Mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to minimize their involvement with the family, developing friendly acquaintances with their youth's families and conveying to the parents that any requests for information about the youth were inappropriate. These mentors were more likely to establish clearly that their primary responsibility was to be supportive of the youth. On the other hand, mentors in dissatisfied relationships were more likely to lose the youth's trust by becoming too involved with the youth's family--these mentors were more likely to offer opinions on parenting or reveal the youth's confidences to parents. These differences in interaction are discussed in the following sections.

#### Depth of Involvement with the Family

The mentors who expressed satisfaction with their relationships appeared to have established trusting relationships with the youth's parents without jeopardizing the young people's feelings of trust: that is, they were minimally involved with the youth's parents.

One mentor discovered this strategy when he asked a question that inadvertently placed him in the middle of a conflict between his youth and the youth's father. Calling to confirm an appointment with the youth, the mentor reached the youth's father. Over the course of their conversation, the mentor made casual reference to an occurrence that the youth had previously told the mentor would warrant canceling their appointment. As the following quote reveals, this disclosure led the youth's father to accuse the youth of either lying or being negligent in communicating with the mentor. According to the youth, the father became angry:

> [My mentor] was supposed to come up Sunday and...we had to reschedule ...I said I was going over [to a friend's] this weekend...but...[my friend] canceled Friday and so I didn't call [my mentor] and tell him about Sunday...I figured that [my mentor] couldn't reschedule the meeting anyway for that day. So I guess one day he calls up my father and asked my father, you know, how'd the weekend with [my friend] go. And my father goes he didn't go over to [his friend's] this weekend. So like when I got home, you know, I guess [my mentor] was talking to [my dad] and when I got home my dad told me to call [my mentor], because my dad was very upset at me because I didn't go [and] didn't call [my mentor].

This mentor reported that this was neither the first nor the only time he inadvertently provoked an incident between the youth and his father:

> I'd call up, and a couple of times I think I made a mistake [of] saying [to his father] Matthew was supposed to call me. Oh, Christ [his father said], don't hold your breath...I just thought maybe [his] father would say [to him] why don't you give Stan a call. That's the wrong approach, for Christ's sake, I shouldn't have used that approach. But I did it and after I did it, I said, God, I shouldn't have done that...[his father] could get on his case for that.

This mentor decided to keep his distance from the youth's father because he felt that anything he conveyed to the youth's father could be construed as criticism of the youth. For example, the mentor reported the following:

> A couple of occasions, I talked to his dad and his dad wasn't agreeable...I called him because I wanted to make sure about today, if we were still on. But the father...[said] oh that son of a bitch, we haven't talked for four days, and he [went] on and on and on.

Other mentors also chose to limit their contact with the family. One mentor, for example, while drawn to help other members of her youth's family, decided that if she was to be the youth's ally, she could not confuse her mentoring role with being an aide to the family:

> I do hurt for [my youth], you'd have to. The mother is really eager to do well, but she had a very troubled relationship with [my youth] and...she doesn't have the guidance that she needs...and the brother has problems, too...I really don't get too involved with him. I just am friendly and I gather that he would like to relate to me more, but I feel that I need to be there for [my youth]. I don't get too involved with the parents and I never tell the parent what we are doing. If she wants to tell them, that's okay. I'm her friend...To me, this relationship is so important that I haven't wanted to do anything that would make [my youth] feel that I am anywhere but in her corner.

This mentor tried to demonstrate respect for the youth's family, but also felt that her relationship with the youth was primary--she tried to establish her relationship with the family through her youth. Like other mentors in satisfied relationships, she viewed herself primarily as a source of support to the youth. And as a function of that role, this mentor negotiated with the family any issues that she was willing to discuss about the youth.

Distance from Family Disputes

Mentors in satisfied relationships also established both a physical and an emotional distance from family disputes. These mentors reported that they could not predict their youth's attitudes toward the parents at any given time, and realized that they could not assume that a youth was consistently ready to talk candidly about family problems or to accept the mentor's perceptions. As a result, the mentors confined discussions of family interactions to those times when the youth introduced the topic themselves. Furthermore, these mentors followed the youth's lead in determining the emotional tenor of the discussion. Saying that mentors maintained an emotional distance from the youth's family and difficulties, however, in no way suggests that they avoided the topic of the youth's family when talking with the young person. As discussed in Chapter II, advice-giving in family matters was one of the most salient patterns of interaction in satisfied matches. According to one mentor:

> We were having lunch...suddenly, out of the clear blue sky, she started telling me about her mother and things that happened, and she suddenly confided in me and told me this whole story, which was very sordid, [an] awful story, and she just blurted this out. It started here and ended here and then the shade came down. About a month later...she [talked about it again]. Like there had been no gap in this conversation...And that was it. On other occasions, now, I've said, how's your mother? And she just said fine. But, at this point I would do nothing to interfere. If there is any dissension there at all, I back off because she's going to stick up for her mother...I wouldn't quarrel with that.

### Mentor's Selection of Interactions With Family Members

Mentors in satisfied relationships were likely to select opportunities for interactions with other family members carefully. For example, two mentors responded to requests for assistance from family members--one helped the older siblings of her youth procure residency and working papers; the other drove his youth's mother to the hospital. Another mentor would spend the day with her youth's family. Other mentors would sometimes casually talk on the phone or in person with family members. As one mentor reported: "Well, every time I pick her up, I sit and talk with the grandmother or the grandmother will call me on the phone and talk a little girl talk." It is important to note that these conversations rarely involved family problems or concerns.

These interactions with other family members shared one important attribute--they did not encroach on the mentor's priority of supporting the young person. In fact, mentors' assisting other family members could reflect that priority, since some youth solicited help for their families. The importance of the mentor's not shifting his/her ongoing help away from the youth lies in the implied meaning of mentoring--a one-to-one relationship where a youth is singled out for special attention and given a special ally. Extending such a role to more than one person in a family can be difficult, particularly when family resources are scarce and/or family members are in conflict.

### Parents' Efforts to Shape the Mentor/Youth Relationship

Mentors in satisfied relationships were also more likely to resist parents' efforts to shape the mentor/youth relationship. These mentors felt that if a lasting trust was to be established, the relationship had to be built following the youth's design, not the parents'. As one mentor reported:

> [My youth's mother] has suggested that I work on certain things with her, but I explained that that's not my role. I said I really want to be a good friend and maybe some of the other things will fall in place, you know.

According to the mentors, parents sometimes solicited assistance with the actual parenting of the youth. Mentors in satisfied relationships typically refused to comply, reflecting their understanding that the role of mentor was incompatible with that of parent. For three mentors, this understanding derived from an awareness of the type of attention their youth routinely received from parents, caseworkers and/or school officials, and a subsequent desire to create a relationship qualitatively distinct from those in the youth's experience. As one mentor explained:

> I'm not telling her what to do. I really don't want to put her off. Everybody does. The counselor at school will ask her questions. Her mother is asking her questions and telling her all the time that she's not responsible.

> And the father is telling her, do your homework, do this, do that. I don't think she needs that from me. I don't want to be doing that.

Other mentors based their refusal to comply on their belief that parenting was beyond the scope of what they could reasonably hope to achieve. According to one mentor:

> I get the feeling that [my youth's mother] wants me to get involved in parenting...I don't want to do that at my age--take responsibility of parenting--because that comes with a lot of aggravation and frustration...It goes far beyond the duty of just being a friend. It goes to the point of administering corporal punishment.

This mentor concluded that a role distinct from that of disciplinarian would be more beneficial to the youth:

> I think [the activities I engaged in with my youth] were always designed to give the boys a good time. I notice these kids are always under some kind of stressful condition--kids are fighting, somebody's yelling, loud noise in the background. It's not easy--violence is no good for kids, either. There's two sisters, two brothers and a mother, so there's a lot of problems for, you know, space and things. So, they have a very hectic life...I think I made a difference only in providing them a relief out--they live in a very hectic environment. I think they enjoyed the outings I took them on.

When mentors did extend their helping role to other members of the youth's family, they put their relationship with the youth at risk. One youth, for example, ran into a problem when her mentor revealed a confidence to the youth's guardian--a confidence that actually concerned the guardian. The mentor's attempt to aid the youth had exactly the opposite result. As the youth reported:

> When I told her one of my problems, she ended up telling my [guardian]...I was telling her how me and my [guardian] get in arguments and how, you know, a fight would start because...my [guardian] was just prying in my business. And so she told my [guardian] what I said about it. It ended up [making my guardian and me] enemies again...[it] felt like... betrayal... because I thought it was going to be just between me and [my mentor].

This relationship, already a year old and positively regarded by both partners, weathered this breach of confidence. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there were central issues in this youth's life that she declined to discuss with her mentor, such as her social life.

Another mentor had a relationship with both the parent and the youth that involved regular keeping of confidences and provision of a considerable degree of assistance.

This mentor gave the youth's mother regular advice on how to handle the youth and made helping her with parenting a primary goal of his involvement:

> Well, from the beginning, I thought there was something wrong in that household. His mother is overprotective and she babies him to the point where she gives him money and he doesn't work. It's very difficult for a mentor to go into a family situation and tell the parents what they're doing wrong with the children...But I got to know her quite well and she complained to me a few times about [his] not working and always wanting money. So I told her...it's of your own doing really. I said...just tell [him] that he has to find...work for his own cigarettes and his own pen money--your husband is not working and you don't have it. Because I knew she was the type that she couldn't say no, you know. So she realized that she was overprotective of him.

The mentor's interaction with his youth's mother created problems for both the mentor and the youth. First, when a serious situation arose about which the mentor possessed knowledge the youth's mother did not, the mentor felt pressure to disclose what the youth had revealed in confidence. As the mentor reported:

> When I would go and pick him up...I would talk to his mother...She knew something was wrong and didn't know what. We were playing this cat-and-mouse game where I was not going to become involved with the family. And then I would ask him, does your mother know; he said, yes, I told her. But I don't happen to believe everything that [he] tells me either, you know. And finally...I saw the mother one morning, we were alone in her house, and I said, so I understand things are going a little better now with [him]...And she said yeah. Well, she said, I'm glad that's over with.

Even though the mentor reported that he and the mother did not discuss the problem, only indicated that they were both aware of the situation, the youth nevertheless believed the mentor had told his mother. As the youth reported:

> Interviewer: You said that you think he talks about you to your mom?
> Youth: Yeah, they talk about me; I'm pretty sure, I'm positive.
> Interviewer: How do you know?
> Youth: Because I just know my mother. You know, of course she's going to talk about me to him, to see how I am, see what I tell him, things like that.
> Interviewer: Do you think that he would...tell your mother what the two of you talk about?
> Youth: Sure.

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The youth revealed his feelings about this lack of confidentiality:

> Interviewer: Do you ever feel disappointed with [your mentor] about anything he said or did?
> Youth: Yeah, the fact that I told him not to tell anybody and he did, that really got me mad. So yeah.

## SUMMARY

When interacting with parents, mentors in satisfied relationships often lent parents an ear, but did not allow themselves to be drawn into lengthy conversations about the youth that could compromise the mentor/youth relationship. Most important, they were very careful not to reveal to a parent what the youth disclosed in private, showing great awareness of the potential of such a breach of confidence to damage the relationship. These mentors also did not allow their focus on the youth to be sidetracked by pleas for assistance from other members of the family, or by establishing competing relationships with other family members. The needs of the youth and their parents were not always reconcilable, and mentors in satisfied relationships were more likely to put the youth's needs first. Mentors who tried to assist in parenting or disclosed the youth's confidences were more likely to be have a dissatisfied relationship.

# IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of four Linking Lifetimes programs--the first product of P/PV's four-year research initiative involving a variety of major mentoring programs--was designed to identify and define effective adult/youth relationships in this setting. Thus, we examined the intervention of mentoring itself--its content (what the pairs do together and talk about), its processes (how and why these relationships develop, continue and end), and its practices (what constitutes effective practices in these relationships). The findings are reviewed in this chapter.

## DEFINING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

There is a tendency among mentoring programs and in research on them to assume that any useful relationship can be called mentoring, and that if a relationship is called mentoring, it must be effective (Flaxman et al., 1988). However, this study is based on the hypothesis that in order for an adult volunteer's relationship with a youth to facilitate positive outcomes for that youth (e.g., improved school performance or increased prosocial behavior), an effective relationship must first develop. This study does not address whether effective or ineffective relationships influence outcomes for youth.[6] It is, rather, a systematic attempt to define effective relationships and determine if such relationships do in fact develop in a mentoring program.

We define an effective relationship as having characteristics that appear to promote both pair members' satisfaction, thus providing evidence that a bond has been established. In examining 26 pairs participating in four Linking Lifetimes programs, we found that such relationships do form. Of the 26 pairs, 17 (roughly two-thirds) were identified as being satisfied with their mentoring relationship, whereas nine (approximately one-third) were identified as being dissatisfied.

We further found that the particular activities the pairs engaged in were not a determinant of satisfaction. Both satisfied and dissatisfied pairs met regularly and took part in similar activities--eating out together, going shopping, watching/participating in sporting events, and talking about school, family, etc. (See Table 4 in Chapter II.) Instead, the way mentors approached these activities and their styles of interaction with the youth seemed to be the factors that distinguished satisfied from dissatisfied pairs.

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[6] P/PV will address this question through its studies of eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, two P/PV pilot mentoring programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, and seven college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Partners in Learning.

The following patterns in the mentor's style of interaction with the youth were hallmarks of effective relationships, with mentors in 16 of the 17 satisfied pairs exhibiting at least six of these nine patterns:

- The mentor understood the youth's reluctance to trust;
- The mentor viewed his/her purpose in the program as being available to give, understanding that, at least initially, the relationship would be one-directional;
- The mentor identified the youth's interests and took them seriously;
- The mentor did not force disclosure;
- The mentor offered reassurance;
- The mentor offered help to solve problems on the youth's own terms;
- The mentor attempted to relate to the youth's experience;
- The mentor attempted to understand the youth's family; and
- The mentor limited his/her involvement with the youth's family by maintaining distance from family disputes, selecting interactions with the youth's family carefully, and not allowing the family to shape the relationship.

The key to these relationships was that the elders allowed them to be youth-driven in their content and timing--the elders waited for the youth to lower their defenses and to determine when trust was established in the relationship. The elders allowed the youth to signal if, when and how the divulgence of personal problems or challenges would occur. Through trial and error, the adults allowed the needs of the youth to define their roles as mentors. This process lasted anywhere from weeks to months, with the elders trying to determine the needs of the youth by finding out their interests, building trust in the relationship by taking those interests seriously, and working on those areas where the youth were most receptive to help. It is important to note that the youth's interests and needs were not necessarily contrary to the adults' concerns. The youth interviewed reported that they appreciated help in finding employment, learning life skills, talking about their futures, and negotiating relationships--all tasks associated with successful transition into adulthood.

Although no pair's interactions can be said to be effective in every way, the elders in satisfied pairs in many ways practiced the same techniques that are mainstays of effective parenting: providing unconditional support, teaching problem-solving and coping skills, and taking the interests of the youth seriously. These actions in turn define social support--the elders provide the youth with information leading them to believe that they are cared for, loved, esteemed and valued, and that they belong to a network of communication involving mutual obligation and understanding (Cobb, 1976).

In matches in which the participants were dissatisfied with their relationship, the reverse was true. The findings indicate that these relationships also shared a common characteristic: the mentor's failure to take the youth's interests into account. When these youth did not have a voice in determining the types of activities the match engaged in, and the elders were prescriptive in determining the areas in which they would help the youth, a degenerative process began. The youth tended to "vote with their feet"--to not show up for meetings and to withdraw from the relationship. Thus, the nine dissatisfied pairs were less likely to exhibit the effective patterns listed earlier; instead, the mentor's style of interaction with the youth in eight of the nine matches exhibited three or more of the following six ineffective patterns:

- The adult did not accept or follow the youth's interests;
- The adult tried to force the youth to disclose;
- The adult criticized the youth;
- The adult preached to the youth;
- The adult did not understand the youth's family, social class or culture; and
- The adult was overly involved with the youth's family.

The fact that two-thirds of the pairs were satisfied with their relationships is significant--it, in fact, leads us to believe that mentoring can be practiced not only by a few gifted adults but by the majority of adults who come forward. However, in light of the difficulties programs encounter in recruiting volunteers (Freedman, 1991), improvements in screening and training practices may help increase the satisfaction rate and reduce the number of matches that fail. Minimizing the chances of relationship failure is critical--the one-third of matches that were not effective gave indications of troubling negative consequences for the youth.

## RECOMMENDED PROGRAM PRACTICES

These relationships do not develop in a vacuum but in a programmatic setting. Thus, how a program is structured and implemented can have a significant effect on relationship formation and possibly on the mentor's style of interaction with the youth. A program's design and practices--including its stated goals and its levels of training and ongoing support--help determine the nature of the intervention. The information the program initially provides to its participants can influence their expectations and initial interactions, while the type of ongoing support and supervision practiced can influence their continued involvement.

Thus far, this report has focused on the mentoring relationship itself, based on interviews with adult volunteers and youth. However, interviews with participants also included questions about their interactions with the program coordinator and other helping professionals, and their perceptions of the training and supervision provided. The following recommendations and discussion, while speculative, are based on participants' responses to these questions and on our conversations with program coordinators--in essence, the cumulative experiences of the four programs studied here. These recommendations are intended to benefit policymakers and practitioners interested in implementing mentoring programs, but are by no means definitive.

### Help the Adult Determine the Youth's Interests

The concept of applying mentoring to youth-serving programs is in its infancy, and therefore difficult to define. However, according to Webster's Dictionary, a mentor is defined as a trusted counselor or guide, implying that trust is an essential element of the relationship. The pairs that were part of this study show that in order for trust to develop, the relationship must be youth-driven, meaning the adult gives the youth a voice in determining what the pair does and talks about together. Allowing this process to happen can be difficult, but if the adults understand that the youth will be receptive to the adults' ideas only after the youth come to appreciate their involvement and become invested in the relationship, then the idea of allowing the youth to help define the relationship seems only sensible.

Chapter II outlines a process through which the adults come to understand and address the youth's needs. Elders reported that they began their involvement in the program with an understanding of the program's goals--"to show the youth that there is someone who cares," "to expose the youth to as many new skills and thoughts and concepts and experiences as I can," "to direct [the youth] to more positive ways of thinking and living and doing"--but not a clear idea of how to pursue these goals or define their role in the relationship. Thus, the adults learned through trial and error how to address the youth's needs in ways that were acceptable to the youth, a process that often took a considerable amount of time. This could be shortened in two ways.

First, since the majority of the youth reported that they were interested in participating in the program to "go places," mentors could be encouraged to do just that initially; programs should stress the affective importance youth place on that activity. Second, a preliminary interview could be scheduled between the mentors and youth, with the expectation that the youth may reveal their interests and provide the mentors with ideas for activities.

### Clearly Specify the Goals of the Program to Both Youth and Adults

Chapter II illustrates how problems can arise if participants do not understand the purpose of the program or the mentor's role has not been clearly defined by both the youth and the adult. When the adults' definition of their role differed from the youth's definition--typically, when adults thought they should address a youth's needs according to their own agenda while the youth thought the mentor should take them places--expectations were contradicted, impeding relationship development.

Helping participants to better understand the goals of the program could eliminate this problem. Each youth and adult pair should agree on the program's goals and plan their relationship accordingly. Consistent with our findings, it is critical that the youth participate in this planning process since the goal of pairs who experienced effective interactions was having the adult help the youth accomplish whatever the youth was interested in--such as going places, finding employment, learning life skills, or learning to solve problems.

### Offer a Stipend to Offset Expenses

According to Temple technical assistance staff and the program coordinators, recruiting adults to participate in the program proved very difficult. This supports P/PV's preliminary findings from other mentoring studies and reflects the experiences of other mentoring programs (Freedman, 1991). Both Temple staff and the program coordinators believed that the stipends offered to mentors enabled the participation of a significant number of older adults, some of whom would not have been able to come forward without it. Given the two-thirds success rate of the matches in these four programs and the difficulty encountered in attracting volunteers, a stipend appears to be a valuable incentive.

Approximately half the elders interviewed were on fixed incomes and thus were more likely to view the stipend as pay. Elders--particularly those in Memphis and Springfield, where mentors received $42 per week plus lunch and $60 dollars per week, respectively--stated that they chose to participate in Linking Lifetimes because it offered meaningful part-time employment. Even those mentors, however, typically felt that the stipend, while needed, was of secondary importance to their involvement:

> It gives everybody, you know, a little extra money. But I think...anybody who gets involved in these programs...They set up meetings and they go and the kid is not there and things like that. The money that they're paying doesn't compensate for that. But what you're there for is for the kid, you're trying to help him.

Mentors in Los Angeles and Miami appeared to view the money as resources for the match. In Miami, approximately half the elders interviewed resided in housing projects and half were retired professionals. Since the amount of the stipend was small ($10 weekly), the elders felt that the money was necessary in order for them to have activities with the youth:

> You spend more than what you would get.
>
> I'm on a fixed income, and say you wanted to take the child that you're involved with to the theater or here or there, it could run into an expense. So I figured that would defray the cost of whatever we might want to do.

In Los Angeles, all the adult volunteers were retired professionals, usually without unmet financial needs; they also spent the stipend on activities with the youth. According to one mentor:

> I didn't think [the stipend] was necessary at all at the beginning. But then as the program went on, I thought it was a very valuable tool because I felt it was important for my mentee to know that I wasn't spending my money on her, that we had money that we could spend together on where we went and what we did, so that when we went shopping for material for a sewing project, she knew that it wasn't money out of my pocket, that we had money to pay for it. We eat out every time I take her out...having the stipend, it just makes these things easier.

Because the youth were not routinely told about the stipend, the question was never raised in the interviews with them. Therefore, it is unclear how many youth knew that the elders received a stipend, or how they felt about the adults' receiving money. However, according to adult volunteers and program coordinators, the stipend not only enabled the participation of elders on fixed incomes, but also allowed matches to take part in activities that required small expenditures. It can also be hypothesized that the presence of the stipend contributed to matches' meeting regularly: perhaps the elders' participation was exemplary--with no unexplained missed appointments with the youth were reported--partly because receiving payment increased their sense of responsibility.

### Help the Adults Establish Relationships with Other Helping Professionals

According to the elders, the youth targeted for the Linking Lifetimes programs have other unrelated adults involved in their lives. These include teachers, caseworkers and social workers. Where the mentor fits into this existing structure of caregiving can be critical. Some elders reported having difficulty negotiating a role for themselves that would complement the roles assumed by these professionals:

> Some of these kids talk to at least nine or 10 different social workers and guidance counselors and shrinks and caseworkers and people like me.

> How the hell do they keep them straight? And none of us talk to each other.
>
> I really didn't know where we fit in together. I always tried to put [forth] the notion that I'm an addition to everything--an addition to the family, an addition to the caseworker, an addition to whatever schooling he's going to go through--and not trying to take anybody's place. You just try to be a plus in any way and try to get him to do whatever he's supposed to do, whether it's going for interviews, or being on time or whatever, you know. So I always tried to maintain contact with all the others and tell them what I was doing so that they know that we're all working together.

Caseworkers and social workers generally served as resources for the mentors. In all four sites, elders spoke positively about the social workers and caseworkers involved in the youth's lives, with mentors seeking out caseworkers and social workers for more information on the youth and speaking of the work that the social workers performed for the youth's family. In Memphis and Springfield, in fact, the mentors were encouraged to speak with the youth's social workers or caseworkers to learn more about the youth.

However, these meetings could be misinterpreted by the youth. When one mentor approached the caseworker for more information on the youth, the youth did not understand the purpose of the meeting, thinking that the elder was dissatisfied with the relationship:

> I feel left out. And I would like to, you know, at least know what's going on. If she's feeling that I don't like her or anything, she should confront me about it so I'll know how to take action right then and there so I don't feel badly about it.

As these examples illustrate, mentors need assistance from program coordinators in introducing their involvement with the youth to other helping professionals in the youth's lives. Both mentors and program coordinators should also explain to the youth the purpose of the mentor's approaching these individuals.

### Recognize the Important Role of the Program Coordinator

The mentors spoke highly of the program coordinators' support, particularly in acting as mediators between the youth and the mentors. The mentors appreciated their intervention when a youth repeatedly missed meetings at the beginning of the relationship. They reported that the program coordinators told the youth of their frustrations--in at least two cases, the coordinators told the youth that the mentor wanted to end the relationship because the youth was not returning phone calls or showing up for meetings. In this way, the program coordinators functioned as "the heavies," reprimanding the youth or telling them of the elders' concerns. The adults also reported that the program coordinators offered encouragement in the early stages, suggesting activities and offering advice when the mentors came to them with problems.

Mentors commonly face situations that require some grappling. Many Linking Lifetimes mentors became aware that the youth and/or a member of his/her family engaged in behaviors that appeared ill-advised for the youth and the youth's future, and wondered if and how to address their concern. Further questions arose not just about the parents' dealings with the youth, but also about the parents' dealings with the mentors, since not all parents were fully cooperative with the mentor/youth relationship.

Program coordinators proved to be a critical resource in addressing such concerns. For example, when one mentor was concerned about a conversation she had had with her youth, she contacted the program coordinator, who contacted the youth's counselor. The counselor, in turn, was able to assure the mentor that the situation was neither serious nor going unaddressed. As the mentor stated:

> What I did, when I was concerned, is that [the program coordinator] got involved and talked to the counselor. I don't want [my youth] to think that I'm talking to the counselor behind her back and telling them about her or being told things that she doesn't want to tell me. And [the program coordinator] talks to the counselor at school, who knows more about [my youth] than I do and gets information.

Mentors also accessed program coordinators' support when they confronted problems with youth's parents. In these cases, the program coordinator acted as a go-between for mentors and parents. For example, when one mentor wanted to open a bank account in the youth's name, the mentor asked the program coordinator to talk to the youth's parent to obtain the necessary documents:

> We needed [my youth's] birth certificate and Social Security card in order to open up the account at the bank, and her mother couldn't find them. I said to [the program coordinator], I need you to have the mother find them. They weren't lost, I knew that. And so, sure enough, they became available the next time. But I don't feel that it's my place to go to the mother and ask her to do anything, that's not what my role is at all.

When some parents failed to relay phone messages or decided that the youth's responsibilities at home took priority over their time with the mentors, program coordinators tried to help reestablish the mentor/youth connection and the families' commitment to the program. When program coordinators were equally unable to influence the parents' behavior, they provided mentors with relevant information and strong support.

Thus, the program coordinator appears to mediate not only between mentor and youth, but between mentor and family, and mentor and caseworker as well. But the coordinator's most important function may be to provide consistent support to the mentor throughout the course of the relationship. In fact, program coordinators and mentors reported having consistent, sometimes daily contact. Practitioners and policymakers interested in implementing successful mentoring programs should understand the invaluable role of the program coordinator, and consider the demands of this paid staff position.

### Encourage Group Activities

Each of the four programs built group activities into the structure of the program to alleviate the stress of one-on-one activities. These group activities included potluck dinners, visits to museums and amusement parks, picnics, etc. According to the youth and adults interviewed, these group activities provided the pairs with opportunities to "go places"--a strong incentive for program involvement for the youth--and to meet new people. Thus, group activities appear to provide another opportunity for helping to shape relationships.

### Provide Practical Adult Training

Mentors received 10 hours of training, which varied in content by site. Training typically was designed to familiarize mentors with the institutions the youth were a part of (e.g., in Springfield, the juvenile justice system; in Memphis, the school), and to provide them with a general description of the youth and their circumstances. The adults interviewed found the training to be helpful, but felt that the best training was experience in the program:

> You can tell somebody all day long, you know, that a 50-mile hike is going to be tough. But until the 50-mile hike, you don't know how tough it is.
>
> I think in this type of a program, you've got to develop your own tools.

The elders were also aware that because the programs were just starting up, their role, like the program, would evolve over time. Still, a few mentors wanted greater clarity. Two adults asked the interviewer if the activities they selected were appropriate, and another stated the following:

> I was feeling my way in the dark.

Elders also wished that they had more information on the youth they were working with, and training to address working with at-risk youth, focusing particularly on the youth's testing behavior--reluctance to talk, missed appointments and unanswered phone calls. One adult thought it would be helpful to hear from current or former mentors about their experiences.

At one site, initial training exercises that included both youth and adults were not well-received, with participants reporting that the "ice-breaker" exercises, such as one in which participants faced each other and mimicked one another's gestures, actually made them feel uncomfortable and were thus counterproductive.

An elder from another site talked about how the training was too academic, focusing on child development:

> [The training on] relationships [was] a sort of sophisticated kind of a thing. I think the goals were a little bit expansive, because for most of [the youth], they just needed...a friend. There are little things that make a big difference...most of the kids that we see need to know that somebody cares about and is interested in them. Also, I feel that we need to emphasize a little bit more how different our relationship is from that of a parent so that it's not a matter of constant correcting [of] manners, or constant pounding on them to do their schoolwork. There has to be some way of just being real simple and telling what our job really is--to be a friend and if we're going to correct things, let's be an example and not constantly pounding on the kids to do the right thing. And I didn't think that was clear...[the training has] to be very simple, not complicated, not sophisticated, not a lot of theory, [but] more practical things, like how you get along, what kind of things you say to kids, what do you do if they swear--is that something you should pick up, correct and, if you do, how do you say it? Do you say, "I'm not comfortable when you talk like that," or do you say, "That's terrible. You're not supposed to use that kind of language?"

This elder articulates how mentor training can both explain the purpose of the program and suggest ways for implementing that purpose. Volunteers could be told that they may be the first person outside the youth's family whom the youth will come to trust, and that the adult should work on building that trust. Volunteers could receive training on active listening--a skill needed to understand the needs of the particular youth assigned to them--as well as problem-solving skills that they in turn could teach to the youth. Finally, the findings indicate that mentors could benefit from ongoing training throughout the course of the relationship--on setting expectations for the match and establishing realistic expectations concerning how the relationship will progress. They should know that they may be frustrated initially with the youth's being noncommunicative, and that they have the support of program staff and other mentors to help them get through the initial and subsequent stages.

To help mentors understand the importance of allowing the youth to define the activities of the match, quotations from youth could be incorporated into training to illustrate the importance youth attach to what the mentor might consider everyday activities: eating out, baking a cake, etc. If mentors understand early in their interactions with the youth that their acts carry affective importance--even if the youth's appreciation is not articulated--the elders' frustrations could be countered.

The mentors also wished that they had more information on the youth's family backgrounds and their needs. Although mentors understood the need to maintain confidentiality, they felt that they lacked pertinent information about the youth early in the relationship. Therefore, training could also include individual sessions in which the program coordinator presents the mentor with as much factual information as possible before the mentor and the youth meet.

### Provide Youth Training

Program coordinators in all four programs typically explained the purpose of the program to the youth individually, telling the youth that they would be matched with someone older. The findings indicate, however, that youth also need concrete examples of exactly what the adult they are matched with can and cannot do to help them. Perhaps at this point, the program coordinator could determine the youth's interests--finding employment, learning life skills, etc. Letting the youth know that the activities of the match are something they can define, or at least participate in defining, may also help relationships develop.

### Provide Support Meetings for Adults and Youth

The elders found weekly meetings with other mentors to be valuable because they were able to hear about other matches, learn from each other's experiences, and receive suggestions for working with their youth. Thus, the adults found these groups to be both supportive and educational:

> I find the meetings...are very good because that's when you learn...You find out it's not all peaches and cream. I mean [the elders] are showing up for meetings and nobody else is. And [the youth are] saying, well, you've got nothing better to do and you get paid for this. You can't take it personally.
>
> I think having the staff meetings [like] we do is significant, because you're not by yourself, you're all in the same bag.

One mentor also recalled how these meetings were used to plan group activities:

> We have our meetings once a month. And now it's getting to where there must be close to...12 of us...showing up regularly. And [the program coordinator] gives us a run-down on all the activities that are to be planned and asks our position on them and whether we have an interest or lets us make our suggestions. And I think it's great.

For the youth, ongoing support occurred on a one-to-one basis with program coordinators, who periodically talked to the youth about their satisfaction with the program. These conversations, however, appeared to be initiated when the program coordinator heard of a problem from the adult volunteer. Although there is little evidence to support the importance of group meetings for youth (only one site met with youth in groups), support groups could prove beneficial if they provide the youth the opportunity to voice their likes and dislikes about the program.

Mentors were particularly interested in learning what the youth had said about them in the interviews conducted for this study. This information was not divulged, because the study is confidential, but mentors clearly wanted a mechanism for finding out how the youth felt about the relationship. One mentor wished that he could have met with both the youth and the caseworker or program coordinator to discuss the status of the relationship, since the youth gave little indication of his feelings about the relationship:

> I was hoping that somebody would have an interview with [him] and with me and it would confirm to me that...everything was great. I don't know if that's true...he doesn't, you know, give me any indication that he's not happy with it.

Although periodic meetings like the one the mentor described did not occur in these programs, our interviews with mentors and youth indicate that such meetings might alleviate both adults' and youth's concerns about the status of their match, and help identify problems in their interactions.

### Prepare the Pairs for Closure

Five of the mentors reported that they were ready to leave the program, having been matched with either one or numerous youth. However, the elders were still in the process of thinking of ways to reduce or end their involvement with the youth. Based on these findings, each program should establish guidelines for ending relationships, particularly those that end positively, so that the participants understand that their involvement in the program has concluded. In closing their program participation, the program coordinator could work with the youth and the adult to decide if and when they will meet outside of the program. Elders should understand that they are not required to continue past the one-year commitment.

## SUMMARY: DEFINING MENTORING IN YOUTH-SERVING PROGRAMS

Traditionally, mentoring has been practiced as a form of support for novice professionals (Flaxman et al., 1988). In this context, mentors offer instrumental support by teaching proteges new skills and introducing them to other people, and emotional or affective support by offering counsel, friendship and guidance and acting as a role model. In return, the mentor is esteemed and respected by the protege. Mentoring occurs naturally, with mentors and proteges typically seeking each other out based on common interests, or is planned as part of an institutionalized program; each party typically has a clear understanding of the purpose of the relationship and its expected outcomes.

This clarity of purpose and process fades when the practice of mentoring is implemented in youth-serving programs. The experiences of participants in the four Linking Lifetimes programs examined here suggest that the concept of mentoring must be redefined when translated to youth. The young people in these programs do not pick their mentors, but are assigned adults who are distant in age, typically unknown to the young person or his/her family, and, in some cases, from a different socioeconomic or cultural background. Perhaps most challenging, youth enter these relationships with past histories that warn them not to trust adults. Because these relationships do not jell instantaneously, but develop over time, the concept of mentoring in youth-serving programs must allow for the development of trust. Further, unlike traditional mentoring relationships, where mentors and protegees share a common understanding of the relationship's purpose, the pairs in the programs examined here must work to arrive at an agreed-on purpose. Finally, our findings indicate that effective programmatic adult/youth relationships focus on providing the youth with support, and the adults' benefits lie in their perceptions of helping someone, of feeling useful and needed.

How, then, can adult volunteers be instructed as to the purpose of the program? How are goals set for mentoring relationships? How can practitioners determine whether these goals have been met? The answers to these questions may lie in recognizing the importance of the youth's developing trust in the adult. Adult volunteers could be instructed that their purpose in these programs is to serve as perhaps the first person the youth will learn to trust outside of his or her family, and that they may also serve to help the youth begin to trust other unrelated adults.

It remains to be seen whether effective relationships can produce positive outcomes in youth's lives. Based on our initial observations, we have been impressed with the potential for the development of programmatic, constructive relationships between adult volunteers and youth. There is ample evidence, however, that modest interventions like mentoring are unlikely in and of themselves to produce long-term outcomes for youth (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992).

But given the universal need youth have for developing caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of at-risk youth, interventions like mentoring can fill a significant need. We believe that well-implemented, programmatic relationships designed to address such a need play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of at-risk youth.

Finally, we conclude that older adults show special promise as mentors for at-risk youth. Unlike the majority of mentoring programs currently in operation, the Linking Lifetimes programs recruit adults ages 55 and older as volunteers. The effectiveness of two-thirds of the matches studied here suggests that this population is well equipped to handle the challenges of working one-on-one with at-risk youth, that older adults who are willing to volunteer have time available to devote to these relationships, and that the youth they serve appreciate their life experience and involvement.

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# APPENDIX A

# THE LINKING LIFETIMES INITIATIVE

## THE PROGRAM MODEL[*]

Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning created the Linking Lifetimes initiative in 1989 to promote the systematic development of programs that provide support to vulnerable youth while simultaneously enabling older adults to remain productive members of society. The initiative aims specifically to demonstrate the effectiveness of using elder mentors to help at-risk youth and young offenders become productive and self-reliant members of society. To achieve this goal, 11 Linking Lifetimes demonstration sites were selected to implement intergenerational mentoring programs across the country.

The programs target middle school students who are in danger of dropping out and/or exhibit problem behavior, and youth 11 to 21 years of age who have appeared before the court for a criminal offense. Recruited volunteers are persons 55 years of age or older who are willing to invest the time and effort needed to help a young person.

With support from the Burden, Ittleson, Edna McConnell Clark and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations, the Exxon Fund for Productive Aging, and a variety of local foundations, the 11 organizations serving at-risk youth and/or the elderly were awarded grants, ranging from $35,000 to $70,000, to develop and implement intergenerational mentoring programs. The programs' annual budgets range from $50,000 to $120,000.

## PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Center for Intergenerational Learning staff, under the direction of Nancy Henkin, is responsible for providing technical assistance to the sites, in addition to documenting their implementation efforts. Each site is expected to meet the following guidelines.

Collaborating agencies. For each site, an agency serving either elders or youth is designated as the lead agency. Each lead agency collaborates with at least one agency representing a population (either youth or elders) not served by that agency. Collaborating agencies include colleges, the local Private Industry Council, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, state and city Offices on aging, Boys' Club, public housing authorities, and the Foster Grandparents Program.

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[*] This description of the program model was provided by Nancy Henkin, Anita Rogers and Cid Perez-Randal of Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning.

Mentor recruitment. Each site is expected to maintain a cadre of at least 15 to 20 active mentors.

Mentor screening/selection. Mentors must be at least 55 years of age (50 years of age for the Latino community); desire to work with the targeted youth population; be able to travel to and from the site and project activities; be willing to complete a training course sponsored by the project; and make a commitment to visit their youth weekly for at least one year for a minimum of two hours per week face-to-face contact.

The process by which elder mentors are screened and evaluated for participation includes a mentor application and interview, a home assessment, reference checks and a criminal record check.

Youth referrals. Participation by the youth is voluntary, though agencies referring youth encourage their participation. Youth exhibiting, or having histories of, violent behavior are usually not referred.

Training/Orientation. Mentors receive a minimum of ten hours of pre-service training as well as regularly scheduled in-service training focusing on issues of adolescent development, drug abuse, conflict resolution, communication and goal-setting. An orientation for youth is held to present the Linking Lifetimes program as a special opportunity for a "select few." The youth are encouraged to share their feelings about "old people" and to ask questions about the project. The youth's families are also familiarized with all project activities through individual or group orientations. Families are kept abreast of match activities through periodic meetings with the mentors and agency staff.

Matching. Temple staff encourage site coordinators to match elders with youth carefully to maximize the likelihood that a positive, mutually beneficial relationship will develop. Matching is done in several ways: some site coordinators initially hold several informal social gatherings to observe whether any "natural" pairings occur; others determine matches after assessing youth needs and mentor skills; and at least one site presents profiles of potential youth to mentors, allowing the mentors to select the youth they feel they can best support.

The primary factors considered for the mentor are access to transportation to allow regular meetings with the youth; preferences regarding sex, race, culture and disposition of the youth; special technical skills and strengths; health conditions that would limit specific activities; and availability. For the youth, needs and strengths (social, educational, etc.); special interests; involvement in extracurricular activities; and preferences regarding the race, sex, culture and job experience of the mentor are considered. Ethnic and language considerations, geographic and social distances between the mentor and the youth, and personality factors are also considered.

Mentor role. Temple staff define mentoring as a nurturing and nonprofessional role designed to help youth gain specific skills as well as increase their sense of competence and self-esteem. Although specific tasks undertaken by the mentors can vary, contact should be purposeful, sustained and face-to-face. It is also important that mentoring be an integral part of any supportive services offered to the youth. Therefore, mentors are encouraged to work closely with teachers, counselors and other service providers.

Mentor/youth activities. Mentors are encouraged to offer a wide range of assistance to their youth, such as emotional support, identification of community resources, help with schoolwork or career development, advocacy and access to cultural and recreational activities. Mentors are also expected to set short-term goals with their youth.

In additional to individual mentor/youth meetings, it is suggested that sites have large-group activities and/or special events for mentors, youth and families.

Supervision and support. In each site, a full- or half-time project coordinator manages daily program activities and supports elder mentors. Regularly scheduled meetings are held for mentors so they can discuss problems and share successful mentoring strategies.

Compensation. Reimbursements, stipends or wages are provided to mentors, depending on a site's program design.

For more information about the Linking Lifetimes initiative, please contact:

Nancy Henkin, Executive Director
Anita Rogers, Linking Lifetimes Project Director
Cid Perez-Randal, Linking Lifetimes Program Coordinator
Temple University Center for Intergenerational Learning
1601 N. Broad Street, Room 206
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 797-6970

## DESCRIPTIONS OF THE FOUR STUDY SITES

The following are descriptions of the four sites at the time of the site visits.

### Neighborhood Youth Association, Los Angeles, CA

The Los Angeles Linking Lifetimes mentoring program is operated by the Neighborhood Youth Association (NYA), a multiservice agency that provides counseling, educational support, employment services and recreation to disadvantaged youth and their families. The program targets 14- to 17 year-olds living in neighborhoods surrounding the agency. According to program staff (a part-time program coordinator and a full-time intern), these neighborhoods are war zones for local gangs. Some youth referred to the mentoring program are members of families participating in NYA programs, while others are referred through the school system.

The program coordinator recruited the volunteers in this study through her neighbors and friends, and through a senior citizen center. These elders are retired professionals, ranging in age from 64 to 83. Each was matched with one youth at the time of the first site visit. The mentors are required to meet with their youth for 10 hours a week, and are paid $4.25 per hour and reimbursed for expenses.

A consultant to the program was responsible for mentor and youth training, which included group sessions with activities. These sessions were also used to create matches. Mentors and youth were brought together in the same room and told to find someone to talk with; the program coordinator then created matches by asking the mentors and youth if they wished to develop a relationship with the person they talked to at the introductory session.

Both the program coordinator and the intern have periodic meetings with the mentors and the youth to discuss how the relationships are progressing, giving participants the opportunity to voice concerns and discuss solutions.

For more information about the Los Angeles Linking Lifetimes program, please contact:

Joan Joseph, Linking Lifetimes Coordinator
Neighborhood Youth Association
3877 Grandview Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90066
(213) 390-2970

Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development, Miami, FL

The Miami Linking Lifetimes mentoring program is operated by the Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development, an agency that provides a full range of social services to families of Dade County. The mentoring program targets senior citizens and youth residing in two large, predominantly black public housing projects: Liberty Square and Edison Square. Both federal housing developments are located in Liberty City, the site of the 1980 Miami riots.

Department of Youth and Family Development staff work within the housing projects conducting family counseling groups and general outreach. The school system often refers families to these staff, who in turn refer youth to the mentoring program.

The program coordinator used her personal social network to recruit adult volunteers, including two former Department social workers. She also recruited housing project residents by making presentations at tenant meetings.

Youth and mentors were matched based on their shared interests and the program coordinator's instincts. Both the youth and the mentor met first with the program coordinator to confirm her decision about the match.

At the time of the first site visit, there were 10 matches. Mentors are paid $10 a week and are required to meet with their youth at least once a week for four hours.

For more information about the Miami Linking Lifetimes program, please contact:

Sharon Kuhn, Linking Lifetimes Coordinator
Metro Dade Department of Youth and Family Development
1701 N.W. 30th Avenue
Miami, FL 33125
(305) 633-6481

Porter Leath Children's Center, Memphis, TN

The Memphis Linking Lifetimes program targets primarily seventh- and eighth-grade teenage mothers who are attending a special alternative school (grades seven through 12) designed to keep these teenagers in school. The students enroll in the Comprehensive Pupil Services Education Center (CPSEC) in the fall while they are pregnant, attending the school for one year. The students are allowed six weeks' homebound stay for delivering the child. The school has an on-site day care center and the teen mothers spend time in a laboratory learning parenting skills. They return to their old schools the following fall.

Since some eligible seventh- and eighth-graders are not participating in the program--because either they are not interested or their parents would not give them permission--one 10th-grader who had asked to participate in the program was matched with a foster grandmother at the time of the first site visit.

According to the project director, the Porter Leath Children's Center began its intergenerational programming through the federal Foster Grandparent Program five years ago. Porter Leath currently has intergenerational programming in 10 sites, with foster grandparents working with children with special needs. The idea of establishing the Linking Lifetimes program as another Foster Grandparent site came in response to the fact that in 1988, 124 babies were born to teen mothers in the Memphis city school system. In fact, nine fourth- and fifth-graders delivered babies. Porter Leath thought that older generations could offer these youth objectivity and life experience.

The adult volunteers were selected from the Foster Grandparent waiting list. Most applicants come to the program by word of mouth, volunteers in the program telling their neighbors or relatives about the program. To establish matches, the program coordinator gave the volunteers the names of three or four students; the volunteers met with the students in the nursery room to decide with whom they wished to be matched.

Foster grandparents spend 40 hours in training before being placed at one of the 10 sites. The foster grandmothers are at the CPSEC four hours a day during school hours, five days a week, and are required to attend two classes a day with each of their students, along with a one-hour weekly group meeting with the students. Each foster grandparent is matched with at least two girls, and receives $2.20 per hour and a free lunch at the school.

For more information about the Memphis Linking Lifetimes program, please contact:

Jane Watkins, Acting Director
Loretta Gaulman, Linking Lifetimes Coordinator
Children's Bureau, Porter Leath Children's Center
868 North Manassas
Memphis, TN 38107
(901) 577-2500

Corporation for Public Management (CPM), Springfield, MA

The Springfield Linking Lifetimes mentoring program is operated by the Corporation for Public Management (CPM), which is involved in other areas of criminal justice, including electronic monitoring programs and private prison industries. The project director founded of the IUE/The Work Connection program, which is detailed in P/PV's Partners in Growth (Freedman, 1988).

The mentoring program targets 14- to 17-year-olds who have been adjudicated in the Department of Youth Services (DYS). The youth are referred to the Linking Lifetimes program through their DYS caseworkers.

In recruiting adult volunteers, the program coordinator was "amazed at how difficult it is to get mentors to serve young offenders," especially minority men. The program coordinator felt his recruitment problems were not helped by competition with other programs. He found, for example, that senior citizen volunteer organizations did want to provide mentors to work with young offenders. Five of the six volunteers who were matched with youth at the time of the site visit were retired professionals, ranging in age from 56 to 73.

The elders and youth were matched based on their interests and the program coordinator's instincts. The program coordinator also met with the mentor and the youth once to confirm his choice.

Mentors meet with their youth for a minimum of six hours per week and are paid $6 an hour plus $.21 per mile. Mentors also attend a monthly meeting to discuss the status of their mentoring relationships.

For more information about the Springfield Linking Lifetimes program, please contact:

Tom Flood, Director
John Tansey, Linking Lifetimes Coordinator
Corporation for Public Management
82 Maple Street
Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 737-8911

# APPENDIX B

# METHODOLOGY

To understand relationships that form between elders and youth, we conducted semi-structured interviews with youth and adults at all four sites at two points in time. The first interview explored the early stages of the relationship by tapping participants' expectations and examining early interactions, while the second interview occurred at a later date, giving the relationships time to progress, remain unchanged or dissolve. For the first round of interviewing, all participants who had been matched and had at least one interaction by the time of the site visit were interviewed. Because not all matches were created at the same time, the matches interviewed had been meeting anywhere from one month to six months, with the average length of match being approximately 3.5 months. The second interview occurred approximately nine months later, when matches were 10 to 15 months old, giving the elders and youth more opportunities for contact.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted separately with youth and adults. Interviews at each site occurred within the same three- to four-day time span when two P/PV interviewers were on site. Almost all interviews were scheduled by the program coordinators, were conducted in the program offices, and were recorded on tape, with the elder interviews lasting on average 1.5 hours and the youth interviews about 45 minutes. Participation in the study was voluntary.

For the first round of interviewing, a total of 58 interviews were conducted, 28 with elders and 30 with youth. These interviews represented all the matches participating in the four programs at the time of the site visits (52 matches) because at least one member from each match was interviewed.* Complete data sets, in which both the elder and the youth in the pair were interviewed, were obtained for 24 matches. This is primarily because Memphis had a total of 26 youth participants matched with 10 foster grandmothers, but only eight youth were interviewed, leaving 14 youth who were not interviewed and a total of eight complete data sets out of 26 matches.

The potential for selection bias is apparent in that the Memphis youth who did come forward for the first round of interviews were more likely than those not interviewed to have had positive experiences in the program. Specifically, those youth whom mentors reported as being difficult were less likely to show up for an interview. Further, since these interviews occurred over the summer, youth who had maintained contact with their mentors or the program were more likely to be interviewed. To counter the potential for selection bias at other sites, P/PV offered the youth $15 to participate in the second-round interviews.

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* At two sites, elders were matched with more than one youth; some elder interviews therefore covered three matches.

For the second round of interviewing, program coordinators were asked to schedule interviews with the 24 pairs in which both members already had been interviewed, regardless of their status in the program--it was important to interview both discontinued and continued matches to learn why relationships ended as well as why they were sustained. However, because the youth in these programs are transient and at times difficult to locate, only 15 of the 24 youth were interviewed again. One youth refused to participate in the second interview. Program coordinators, however, were able to schedule second-round interviews with six youth and four adults who were not interviewed before. Thus, complete second-round data sets (in which both the adult and the youth in the pair were interviewed) were obtained for 27 matches.

To reduce the length of the interviews with mentors matched with more than one youth, at the start of the second-round interview, each mentor was asked to describe his/her relationship with just one youth. The interviewer chose the youth for the mentor to focus on, and only youth interviewed in the first round were selected. In cases where more than one of the mentor's youth had been interviewed in the first round, the mentor focused on his/her relationship with the youth who was being interviewed again--typically the youth with whom the mentor had had the most contact.

As Table B.1 shows, longitudinal data were obtained for both participants in 17 matches. For 15 matches, cross-sectional data were obtained for one pair member and longitudinal data for the other. In two matches, the adult and the youth in the pair were interviewed once.

## INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Semistructured interview guides were used to ensure that each interview addressed the same issues. Four separate interview guides were developed--for youth and elders for each round of interviewing. Given the nascent state of this field of research, information about the relationships was gathered from the participants, unencumbered by pre-existing typologies (Boyce, Kay and Utti, 1988).

Participants were asked open-ended questions about key processes of the relationship, such as talking, disclosing information, making joint decisions and arguing. However, because research on relationships tends to use these behaviors alone to describe relationships (Duck and Pond, 1989), this study used information regarding the participants' perceptions, attitudes and feelings toward their partners and the relationships as another source of data. Early discussions with program coordinators and participants at two of the four sites aided instrument development. These initial conversations also helped to establish that all interviews would be scheduled in a common location, away from the youth's home. This helped to ensure confidentiality.

**TABLE B.1. NUMBER OF MATCHES INTEVIEWED BY SITE**

| Matches Interviewed | Memphis | Miami | Los Angeles | Springfield | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Both Interviewed Twice | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 17 |
| Youth Interviewed Once<br>Mentor Interviewed Twice | 4 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Youth Interviewed Twice<br>Mentor Interviewed Once | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Youth and Mentor Interviewed Once | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Youth Interviewed<br>Mentor Never Interviewed | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Youth Never Interviewed<br>Mentor Interviewed | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Total | 26 | 9 | 6 | 11 | 52 |

Previous research efforts on youth-serving mentoring programs were also used to inform the development of the interview guides. An earlier investigation of adult/youth relationships conducted by P/PV (Freedman, 1988) was used as a point of departure. This study explored the following dimensions: participants' background characteristics, activities of the pair, feelings about the relationship, and perceived benefits of program participation.

In a study of mentors and youth participating in the Linking Up mentoring program, mentors' conceptions of their purposes in the program were found to be critical in defining their role in the relationship (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1990). Thus, our interview guides included questions asking both elders and youth to define the purposes of their activities and the overall program.

The content of first-round interviews was analyzed both to provide a baseline picture of relationship formation and to aid the development of the second-round interview guides. This analysis was based on the perceptions of both the youth and the adults to ensure that the essential elements of the relationships identified were based on the aspects most meaningful to the participants.

This analysis resulted in the identification of the following dimensions of relationships: behavior in the relationship, perceptions of the relationship and each other, role of the mentor, and context of the relationship in the youth's and mentor's lives. (See Table B.2.) Together, these dimensions provide a detailed, complex and comprehensive description of adult/youth relationships.

The first dimension, behavior in the relationship, refers not only to how often the elder and youth meet, what they talk about, what they do together and the length of these interactions, but also to the antitheses of these behaviors--how often the elder and youth miss meetings, what subjects they do not discuss, and what activities they do not do together. We also examined other behaviors, such as how often the pair argued and how such differences were resolved, how they decided what to do together, and the reasons for missed meetings or periods of no contact in the relationship and how these missed meetings were addressed.

Perceptions of the relationship and each other refers to the affective content of these behaviors--how committed the pairs feel to the relationship; how attached they are to their partners, focusing on any indication of closeness or likeability; how much they trust each other; the desire the adult expresses to understand or empathize with the youth; characteristics the youth describes as having in common with the adult; the youth's feelings about being matched with someone older; the youth's perceptions of support received; the adult's perceptions of support given; the adult's feelings of being appreciated or being frustrated; both participants' expectations for the relationship; both participants' perceptions of decision-making in the relationship; and their satisfaction with the relationship.

## TABLE B.2. DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

I. Behavior in the Relationship

- Regularity and Length of Meetings
- Description of Critical Incidents
  - --Description of activity
- Content of Verbal Interactions
  - --In person and on phone
- Ease of Communication
- Crisis Intervention

II. Perceptions of the Relationship and Each Other

- Description of Critical Incidents
  - --Description of affect in relation to activity
- Expectations
- Attachment
- Trust
- Adult's Understanding or Empathy
- Youth's Perceived Commonality
- Liking
- Perceptions of Age
- Youth's Perceptions of Support Received
- Conflict
- Satisfaction
- Commitment
- Reciprocity

III. Role of the Mentor

- Adult's Perceptions of Role in Relationship
- Youth's Perceptions of Adult's Role in Relationship

IV. Context of the Relationship in the Mentor's Life

- Life Transitions
- Health Problems
- Family Network
- Motivations for Involvement

V. Context of the Relationship in the Youth's Life

- Adult's Knowledge of Youth's Family
- Adult's Position in Relation to Youth's Network

Role of the mentor refers to how both the youth and the elder define the elder's role in the relationship. This dimension focused primarily on the elder's described intentions and actions, and the youth's perceptions of the elder's actions and their effects. Context of the relationship in the mentor's life refers to the adult's motivations for becoming involved in the program and life circumstances (health, death, divorce, etc.) that may affect the relationship. Finally, context of the relationship in the youth's life refers to how the elder fits into the youth's support network--if the elder fulfilled a unique or complementary role in the youth's life--and the elder's knowledge of the youth's family and friends.

The second-round interview guide included questions on each of the dimensions listed above, with one addition. In the second interview, participants were asked to recall critical incidents or memorable interactions with his/her partner that were either pleasant or unpleasant experiences, and were then asked questions about these incidents. Thus, the dimensions of the relationship were explored by examining points in the relationship that the participants identified as being significant.

## ANALYSIS

Given the large amount of data collected--117 transcripts comprising over 500 pages of text--the decision was made to focus on 26 matches: six matches each from Miami and Los Angeles, and seven matches each from Springfield and Memphis. Matches in which both the youth and the mentor had been interviewed twice (17 pairs) were given first priority, matches in which one pair member had been interviewed once and the other had been interviewed twice (15 pairs) were given second priority, and matches in which the mentor and the youth had been interviewed once (two pairs) were given third priority.

Because this study was designed to examine the dynamics of relationships across time, the analysis focused on 16 of the 17 pairs in which longitudinal data were obtained for both participants. However, because this study is also concerned with the processes and dimensions of relationships at a given point in time, the analysis also focused on nine of the 15 pairs with cross-sectional data for one pair member and longitudinal data for the other, and on one of the two pairs in which both the adult and the youth in the pair were interviewed once (in this case, at the time of the first interviews). The inclusion of pairs with cross-sectional data in the analysis also helped to reduce any effects of selection bias, because, in the second round of interviewing, dissatisfied youth not interviewed before were likely to come forward in response to the payment incentive. All remaining interviews were read to inform the development of the second-round interview guides and to confirm the findings of the analysis.

Of the 26 matches, 19 pairs were of the same race (six were white, 11 were black and two were Hispanic) and seven pairs were of different races (two were a black mentor matched with a Hispanic youth, two were a white mentor matched with a black youth, and three were a white mentor matched with a Hispanic youth). Ten of the matches were male, 14 of the matches were female, and two of the matches were female mentors matched with male youth.

Both rounds of the interview data on the 26 matches--totaling 83 transcripts--were analyzed item by item according to the dimensions of the relationships. Two coders were responsible for abstracting material from the interviews that addressed each of the relationship dimensions. For example, quotations that addressed feelings about the relationship and each other were grouped together, information about behavior in the relationship was grouped together, etc. By dividing each interview into these categories, can elder's responses could be cross-checked with the youth's responses, and a participant's first-round responses could be compared to his/her second-round responses. This system also allowed for the cross-referencing of categories within an interview--a participant's feelings about the relationship could be cross-checked with how often the match met. New analytical categories were created as patterns emerged from the data. For example, a third coder grouped quotations that addressed program implementation and the mentor's involvement with the youth's family. Two other researchers (the authors) then read through all the material that was abstracted, and both were in 100 percent agreement with the three coders on the information abstracted.

The two authors then grouped matches by the pairs' satisfaction with the relationship. Three indicators of satisfaction were developed, two of which were the same for adults and youth:

- Feelings of liking, attachment to and commonality with the other member; and
- Commitment to the relationship, expressed as a desire to continue it.

The third indicator of satisfaction was assessed differently for youth and adults. For adults, this indicator was their perception of being appreciated or of making a difference in the youth's life. For youth, the indicator was the extent to which they viewed the mentor as a source of support. To establish this indicator, we examined both the mentor's and the youth's perceptions of what the mentor did and how the youth responded, and found that these perceptions were not necessarily the same. Matches were then scored on a scale of zero to six.

Given the complexities of these relationships, any attempt to characterize them is subjective and open to the bias of the coders' interpretations. To counter this, the two authors independently scored each match, then compared scores. There was 100 percent agreement between the two authors in scoring the relationships' satisfaction, with the 17 matches scoring above the midpoint (more than three points) defined as being satisfied, and the nine matches scoring below the midpoint (three points or less) defined as being dissatisfied. The range of scores was from one to six.

Those relationships grouped together according to the participants' expressed satisfaction (17 matches) or dissatisfaction (nine matches) were examined to determine what behavioral characteristics and other attitudinal characteristics the relationships shared. For example, pair members' satisfaction with the relationships was compared to their descriptions of other behaviors of the relationship--whether the youth felt he/she could confide in the adult, and the youth's perceptions of the adult's receptiveness and trustworthiness (ability to keep a secret); whether the youth had done so, whether the youth regularly confided in anyone, and how that person's receptiveness and trustworthiness compared to that of the adult volunteer; how often the adult criticized or praised the youth, etc. Patterns that emerged through the analysis were then cross-classified for all the matches by their satisfaction with the relationship.

## INTERVIEWER TRAINING

Interviewing youth is significantly different than interviewing adults. For approaching interviews with youth, the interviewers were trained to step out of their everyday habits and expectations concerning conversation, because the rules and assumptions that guide adult communication rarely apply to children and young adolescents (Garbarino and Scott, 1989). For example, for a young person, the situation that most closely resembles an interview--when he/she is asked numerous questions by a unrelated adult--occurs in school, where an adult judges the youth's responses to questions and penalizes the youth for incorrect or inadequately understood answers. The appearance of an unfamiliar adult with tape recorder, interview guide and note pad in hand can only compound an adolescent's discomfort. Therefore, interviewers were trained to alleviate the youth's discomfort by demonstrating empathy and support, using the following methods: (a) taking a few minutes at the start of the interview to establish rapport; (b) explaining the purpose of the interview, stressing its confidentiality, assuring the youth that there were no right or wrong answers, and reiterating that the youth did not have to answer any questions he/she felt uncomfortable addressing; and (c) reassuring the youth of the importance of his/her responses throughout the course of the interview through positive reinforcement (nodding, smiling and repeating what the youth said). Finally, because youth cannot be expected to provide extensive detail concerning all the nuances of his or her relationship (though many did), interviewers were also trained to aid the youth to recall events through a series of follow-up questions or probes.

Because the potential existed for the interviews to raise difficult or painful issues, interviewers were trained to recognize when youth did not want to answer questions. Further, at the end of all interviews with youth, the interviewer encouraged the youth to seek out an adult the youth identified as being important (e.g., a parent) to discuss any issues the interview might have raised.